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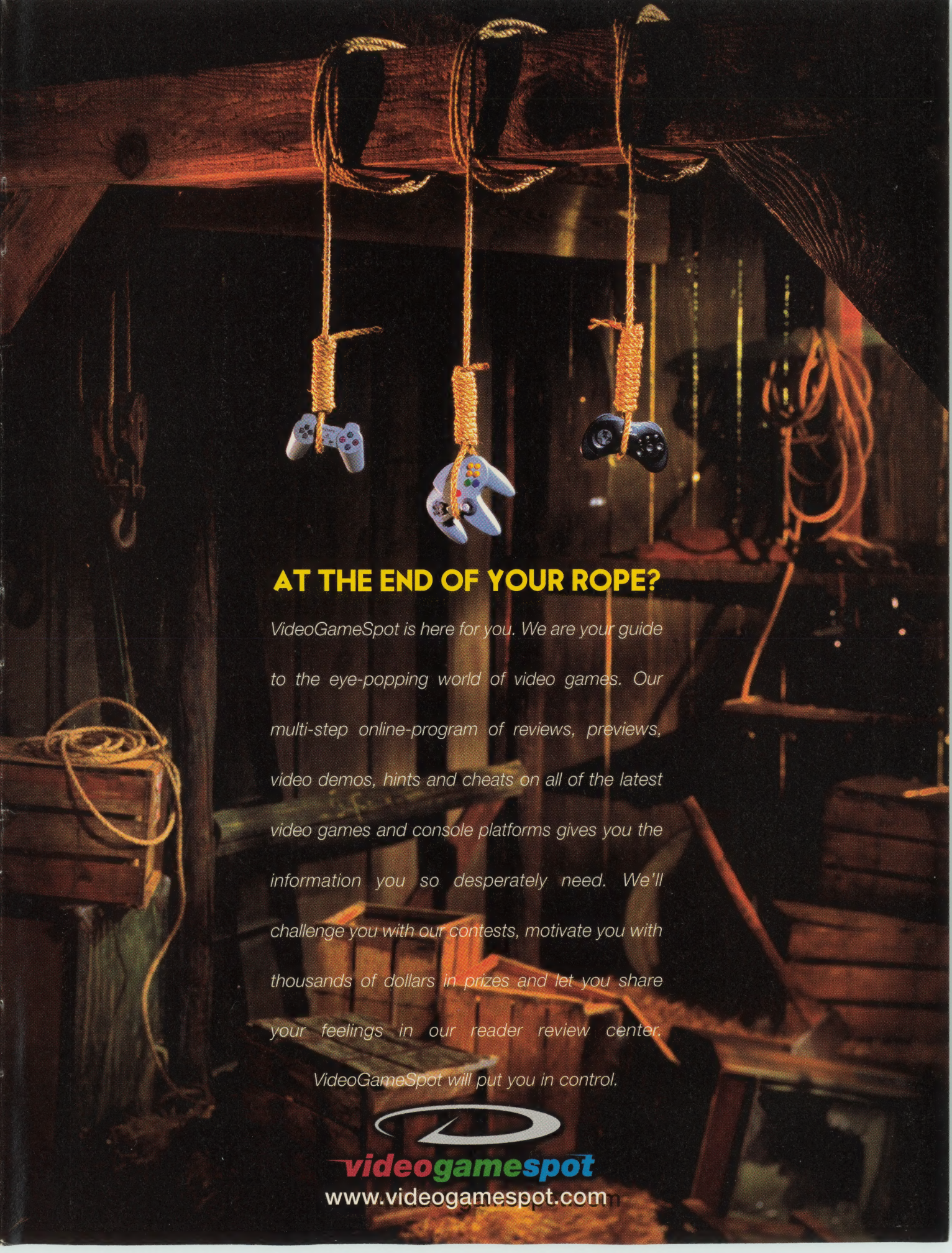
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cover art by Rich Borge/Gravity Workshop

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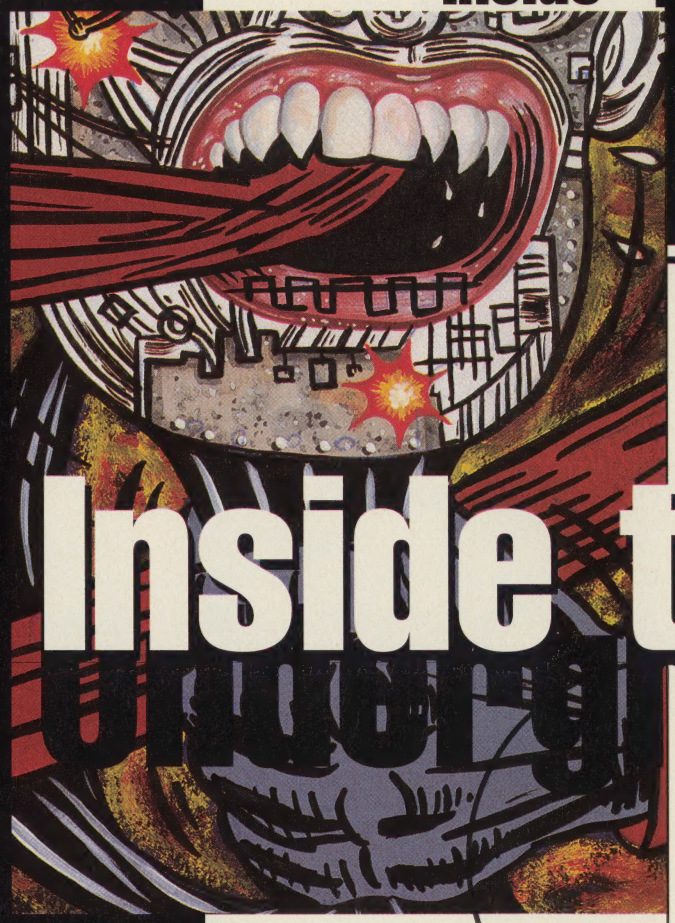

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When people fondly recollect their childhoods, they tend to think of soothing things like sand castles, ice-cream cones, Little League wins, pet bunnies and trips to Disney World.

But we remember another side to childhood with equal fondness: playground insults, bottle rockets, Kill the Carrier and ghost stories filled with disembodied hands and dripping blood. That stuff was *fun*.

We're not angry or chronically depressed, but we do think if all of life were reduced to the saccharine singsong of "My Favorite Things," it'd be pretty boring. So it is with the Net.

The Internet provides the perfect outlet for our fears and loathings: No longer must we suffer in silence through the inanities of Madison Avenue or the oppressiveness of corporate America. We can pour our outrage into the ears, or rather the minds, of thousands of sympathetic fellow netizens. We can get it all out of our systems, then generate some more and get all that out, too.

In this issue's feature "The Web's Most Hated," Jonathan Vankin takes a look at deserving targets singled out for Web site slammings: David Hasselhoff, Hootie and the Blowfish, Bob Saget and other overexposed, undertalented megasuperstars have all fallen prey to the poison pens of citizens with server space. If global communication is exposing any truths about the human species, one of them must be that we all make each other sick.

Schadenfreude (joy at the misfortunes of others) is a nearly universal experience, both on the Net and off; none but the most saintly among us can help but feel just a little bit better about ourselves after witnessing the downfall of a rival. That's why it makes us happy when the rich, famous and egotistical—like Der Hasselhoff—get some kind of comeuppance. We deserve fame and fortune more than they do, the smug bastards. So, hey, if we can't furtively key their Jaguar XK8 convertibles, we can at least make fun of them as publicly as possible (read: on the Net). Plus, some people are so irritatingly successful at everything that venting some spleen in their direction is just a relief, whether or not they deserve it. (A good example is the Web page on "Why Gwyneth Paltrow Must Die" at **apokrypha.com/rhizome/gwyneth.html**.)

<<<<< hyperlink >>>>>

The catharsis continues on Usenet, where the entertainment value of obscene and outrageous insults is recognized and appreciated. Newsgroup flames have fostered a whole subculture knit together by the delight its members take in gratuitous malice. For our FAQ this issue, senior editor Rob Bernstein talked to one of the masters of the form, T.J. "Spark" Miller, and discovered the methods behind the madness of flame wars.

see page 52

More sparks (well, one Spark, first name David—along with features editor Gloria Mitchell) fly in "Culture of Personality," where you'll find out where and how to put some *action* into Net interaction, and spice up your chat sessions with new technologies and time-honored trash-talking tactics. For our Top 11 lists, the whole *IU* staff climbed on the hate bandwagon to take on the Most Overused Internet Metaphors and Motifs, and the Most Offensive Web Designs. We then climbed right back off to bring you some good stuff on the Net, like the Funniest Sites of All Time (not everything out there is flame-worthy!).

And just to prove our own willingness to participate in the rampant rancor on the Net, we invited "Spark" Miller to flame *IU*. His response is enshrined on our site (**www.underground-online.com**). We thought it was pretty good, but wanted to give you, our readers, the chance to one-up Spark by sending us a flame yourselves.

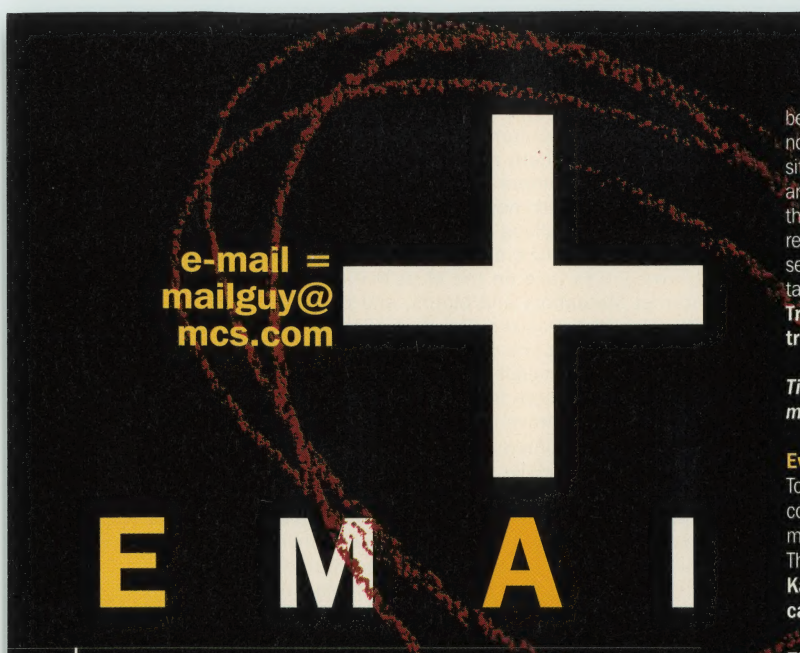
So go ahead: Tell us why we're lame, why our magazine sucks, why Ziff-Davis should send us packing for the unemployment lines post haste. You'll find our "Flame IU Contest" at **www.underground-online.com/contest/**, where we've got a prize waiting for the person who sends us the most scathingly inventive flame.

So go ahead. Tell us why we're lame, why our magazine sucks.

Just don't tell us that we're indistinguishable from *Wired*. THAT would hurt.

With this issue, we say goodbye to (erstwhile) features editor Sarah Ellerman, who, like so many before her, was lured away from Lombard by the siren call of Silicon Valley. Not only was Sarah a terrific editor, she was a good friend and she'll be sorely missed. Rather than getting all maudlin, and in keeping with the spirit of the issue, we thought we'd present out Top 11 things we'll remember about Sarah:

11. The way readers would call her "Nazi"
10. Her unique ability to be startled by anything
9. Her absolute and unfailing cynicism in all new things and technologies
8. All those crusty half-filled mugs and bottles on her desk
7. Her ability to entertain us all with strange and sordid stories from her past
6. The scary way complete strangers would immediately latch themselves on to her
5. The Cybermall Mogul
4. The way she held her liquor
3. The tomato splotch she kindly left us underneath her desk
2. Her undying loyalty to friends (no matter how annoying they might be)
1. Three Words: Big Pink Ball



Who You Callin' An Oxymoron?

How can any publication call itself "Underground" and be a product of Ziff-Davis? I thought that underground meant outside the mainstream, avant-garde, offbeat, even eccentric. I am not saying that what you're doing is not worthwhile. I have not read your zine much yet; it wouldn't be fair to you to even suggest that you guys don't know what you are doing. It's just hard for me to take you seriously, that's all...

Robert Armstrong
gonzobob@concentric.net

Tiny says: We can call ourselves "Underground" for the same reason you can call yourself Robert. It's called the First Amendment. Robert, I think if you look around the newsstand, you'll find that in comparison to the other Internet magazines, IU is indeed avant-garde, offbeat and eccentric. But considering you're judging the magazine while admitting you're not familiar with it—well, Robert, it's hard for me to take you seriously.

Toot-Toot-Tootsie

I just read your February/March issue and as always, it's great. The banner across the top ("Exclusive: How Many Licks It Actually Takes to Get to the Center of a Tootsie Pop") had me searching through every article. I wanted to see what you had gotten for the number of licks. My sister once did it in 647 licks, but she has an exceptionally long tongue. Did you ask them how long it took to finish a jawbreaker?

Sherri Kidner
SherriK769@aol.com

Tiny says: In case other readers missed it, back in IU #15 we tested a new Internet service, Answers.com, with the eternal question, "How many licks does it take to get to the Tootsie Roll Center of a Tootsie Pop?" Their answer was 728, and we have to assume the testers had only average-length tongues. And no, Sherri, we did not ask them about a jawbreaker, but we did ask them how long it takes for a piece of Fruit Stripe Gum to lose its flavor.

Will to be Weird

Sup Tiny,

I happen to think that *IU* is the only interesting and content-infested Internet magazine out there and what you provide me with is something I could never find in *.net*, *The Net* or *Wired*. My favorite section is "Weird on the Web," a perfect view of what most of us in our normal point-and-click lives pass by everyday. Although "Weird" covers about 16 sites a month, that's just not enough for me. With all due respect, I need more and I am asking for *IU*'s assistance and guidance. At this point, you may be saying to yourself, "Who is this moron?" ***(Eds: Yes, something like that.)*** But that vast bizarre land we call the Weird Wide Web that can only be reached through the pops, beeps, and fizzes of the phone line is thriving with forbidden subjects and topics not yet graced with the gift of being publicly perused by *IU* fans. I say, let these sites have their time of day; let them become the night lights in our monitors, and discontinue sending them back through the path of endless links from whence they came with the quick click of the back button. I guess this letter is kind of a request. I am sure you can shove some more weirdness into the mix. I have seen stuff in *IU* that I have never seen anywhere else...make the next batch taste better.

Trident
trident@monmouth.com

Tiny says: My apologies, but by law, only 20 percent of the magazine every month can be "weird."

Everyone's Got an Opinion

Today, I bought a copy of your magazine here in the Philippines. It was the best, compared to the other lame magazines. My suggestion, though, is that you add more pages to your WebGuide.

Thanks!

Kars
capino@mail.dpsi-filipinas.com.ph.ca

Tiny says: Wow, it looks like all of a sudden everyone wants to be an editor. Kars, it's quality, not quantity that counts. In each issue of IU you get, on average, 100 wonderful site reviews. Visit each of those sites for an average of 20 minutes apiece and that's over 33 hours of quality surfing a month. Could your heart take any more? I think not.

Hacker Sting

IU is a very nice magazine but one thing that annoyed me was the letter in the April issue from that lamer KRyPTeR. The article "Zen and the Art of Hacking" by Richard Thieme in the same issue talked about these types of losers who think TaLKiNg LIkE ThIS is K-rAd. I have met and chatted with many hackers and I have never heard any true hacker talk like that. I am on AOL and I meet a lot of these losers who do talk like morons. Type in English. Hacking is about learning, not being cool.

Ghost in the Machine
d8246@aol.com

Hacker Redefined

Hey, I'm flipping through the "E-mail" section of your April '97 issue and I'm beginning to wonder about something.

Exactly when did typing in alternating case, profusely misspelling words, and substituting "z" for "s" at every chance make somebody a hacker? (See the so-called "KRyPTeR" letter).

Environmentalists across the globe should be furious about the amount of trees you must cut down to print your pointless, redundant "mail" column in each and every issue of your otherwise fine magazine. If the editors of *IU* have any sense, our friend "Tiny" will be combing through the *Chicago Tribune*'s Jobs section very soon.

Regards,

Case Ostrowski
cia@megsinet.net

The Editors say: Thanks a lot, Case. Tiny just ran out of the room blubbering. You had a good point, but then you had to lay into poor old Tiny. You really did it this time. We don't think he's coming back. You know, he may not be perfect, but once you get to know him, Tiny's a hell of a guy. Now what are we going to do? We've got an entire magazine to finish and now we have to comb through all of these letters to fill up the pages. Tell you what, Case, we'll let the readers decide if Tiny is really just dead weight. E-mail us at mailguy@mcs.com with the subject line "Tiny rules" if you appreciate the job Tiny's been doing; use the subject line "Tiny sucks" if you think we should be looking for a new mailguy/gal. As for the rest of the section, will someone please call that guy Ovi who used to be Tiny's assistant and see if he can fill in for the rest of the issue?

Whatever happened to Paul Hogan?

I read the December *IU* (so it's a bit late) and just thought about warning you that few Australians drink Foster's (see "E-mail"). Some honest and good Aussies actually deny Foster's Down Under roots. While it does come from there (it says so on the label), airlines and bars all over perpetuate the myth that Aussies love it. Apparently, most of them don't love it enough to drink it.

obit.lee@ac.com

Ovi says: Hey, guys, thanks for letting me fill in for Tiny. If I can just put in my two cents about Tiny, he's the best friend I've ever had. While I'd love the opportunity to come back and work full-time for IU, if it means no Tiny, well, then, forget it. I urge all of you reading this to send in mail to mailguy@mcs.com in support of Tiny.

As for your letter, Obit, thanks for clearing that up. Now we can all get some sleep.

Zen and the Art of Praising

Thank you for publishing "Zen and the Art of Hacking" in your April issue. You are trying to give hackers their rep back, and that's good. As I read through it, I totally agreed with everything you wrote and said in it. It was great.

Thanks.

flux@ns.net

I Love You, Man

Hey, Tiny,

Just thought I'd drop a line and let you know "I love you, man!" But seriously, I look forward to the arrival of your rag every month at my local newsstand. It's one of the only magazines I can honestly say I read cover-to-cover. Keep up the good work!

Rick

RMAN4443@aol.com

P.S. Now can I have your Bud Light?

Ovi says: Gee, Rick, thanks for the kind letter. I just wish Tiny was around to read it. And I don't drink on the job, pal.

Not a Cheater

Dear Editors:

High Performance Papers' Peter Revson's comment that poorly named Web sites such as "School Sucks" and the "Evil House of Cheat" give the industry a bad name evidently had no effect on Steve Knopper and his "Cheaters Do Prosper" article in April's issue. That title implies that businesses such as the Term Paper Warehouse (**www.termpaperwarehouse.com/tpw/**) are cheaters, when in fact we are far from it and go to great lengths to ensure the materials we provide are used properly.

We can't comment on the aforementioned "services," but we at The Ultimate Term Paper Archive have maintained our respected position among such media-playing, industry-degrading sites for three years now, providing only high-quality, current informational materials to a demanding clientele. We don't condone cheating and, in fact, will not accept an order until and unless the prospective client agrees to a number of terms, including, among others, to use the data we provide for informational purposes only. Knopper's implication has far reaching consequences—ones we, unlike Knopper, identified long ago and successfully address on a daily basis to ensure they don't come to fruition.

Yours very truly,

Phil Hill, Archive Curator

Term Paper Warehouse

Likewise

We'd like to set the record straight regarding Steve Knopper's "Cheaters do Prosper" article. Unlike some of the very questionable companies we were lumped in with, we do not sell nor give away term papers, but rather provide both educational and business research to a wide variety of students and professionals based on their individual requests.

While we are privy to the "negative perceptions" Knopper correctly described, we'd prefer that they weren't perpetuated through omission of such relevant information that would otherwise set us apart from a trade that doesn't begin to come close to our quality, content, and ethical standards—not to mention the vast difference in our products.

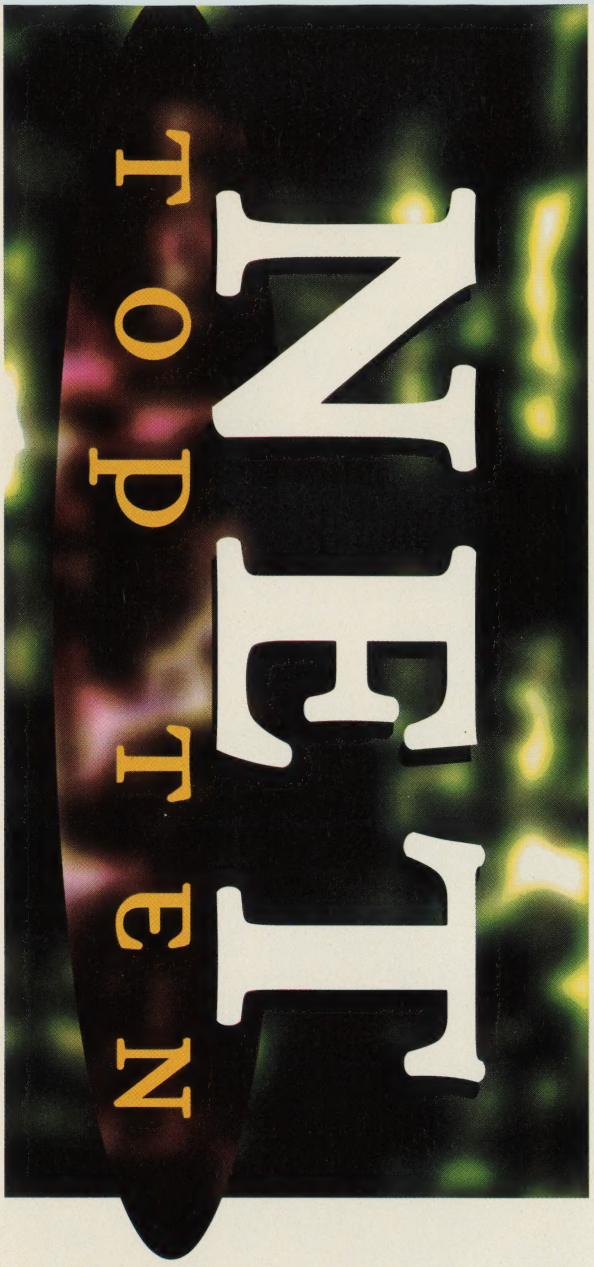
Sincerely,

Peter Revson, Managing Research Consultant

High Performance Papers

The Editors Say: We, the editors, and not our writers, come up with the headlines for the articles in the magazine. Steve went to great lengths in the article to distinguish between the legitimate term-paper resources and the ones that are operated with somewhat shadier purposes. Steve also more than adequately described the mission and operation of Peter Revson's High Performance Papers. While we regret any misunderstandings the headline may have caused, we stand by the story 100 percent.

Remember, readers, Tiny, Ovi or whoever's working in the mailroom reserves the right to edit your letters for publication, especially if you can't spell ("weird" is with an "ei," Trident). Don't forget to send your letters in support of Tiny with the subject line "Tiny Rules" to mailguy@mcs.com. If you think Tiny should go, send a message with the subject line "Tiny Sucks." Meanwhile, we're going to try to talk Tiny into coming down off that ledge. Special thanks to Ovi for filling in this month.



#1
The Toaster Museum Foundation Homepage

www.spiritone.com/~ericn/index.html

For some, the true pleasure of toast comes not from the final golden-brown slice, but from the toasting process itself. Of utmost importance to that process is a good toaster. And that's where this site comes into play. The Toaster Museum is a collection of vintage and unique toasters (*not* toaster ovens) and toast-related memorabilia and accessories. Alas, while the museum existed in real space at one time, it's been relegated to the cyberghetto until the Foundation can raise enough funds to house the collection again. We urge you to wander the halls of the virtual archives and, if you're so inspired, link to instructions on how to donate funds and supplies so that someday, Americans will be able to experience these appliances in person once again. *(Read more about The Toaster Museum in "Spotlight" on page 70.)*

#2
The Micronations Page

www.execpc.com/~talossa/patsilor.html

Micronations are countries that have been declared independent but have not yet received diplomatic recognition. Here, a list has been compiled of some of the world's most notorious. The author provides fascinating historical descriptions of the "countries," their self-anointed kings and their square acreage (footage), and rates them with regard to their seriousness (eccentricity?). Some lands have no more than one inhabitant, and others are covered under several feet of water—but that hasn't deterred these unusual monarchs who claim sovereignty over their so-called independent governments. A great site for those interested in starting a totalitarian regime.

#3
Raphael Carter's Home Page

www.wavefront.com/~raphael/

If reading someone else's poetry and archived Usenet posts doesn't sound like fun, you haven't yet been to Raphael Carter's Home Page, which "has to be believed to be seen." When you get there, you'll find a site littered with literary references, as well as laudatory quotes for Carter's own first novel, *The Fortunate Fall*. Pointers to the author's projects include The Darmok Dictionary (an exploration of the metaphor-based language of a group of *Star Trek* aliens) and Separated at Verse (a "literary trivia game"). We liked the essays on androgyny and the sonnets on science, in which fossils are "ancient creatures that rough death has thrown/Down deep to silted lakebeds, dark and dense/Which pressed them into shaly permanence/Preserving ancient ages for our own." Even the "recommended reading" list is more than the usual selection of speculative fiction; it also covers criticism, biology, philosophy and poetry, with annotations on each, all in the admirably articulate voice of an extraordinary netizen.

#4
The Movie Clichés List

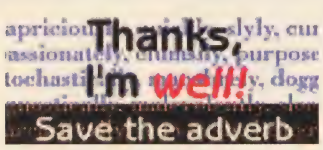
www.like.it/vertigo/cliches.html

Forget about suspension of disbelief! Challenging hundreds of timeworn Hollywood film clichés, the author of this list categorizes embarrassing and silly film moments and encourages visitors to contribute their very own observations, like: "Spaceships make noise;" "Whichever tree branch the hero has perched on, the villain will invariably pause under;" and "All G.I.s know how to make a still out of a jeep radiator." Particularly amusing is the site's special section devoted to the NBC mini-series *Asteroid*. More than ever, it's evident that Hollywood is run by a bunch of idiots.

#5
Save the Adverb!

www.cs.wisc.edu/~dgarrett/adverb/index.htm

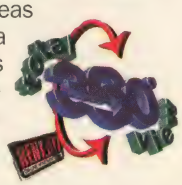
Replacing adverbs with adjectives isn't just for sports stars anymore ("We played real good!"). According to the University of Wisconsin student who runs this site, we've all been guilty of this grammatical sin, and it's time to start actively campaigning for the adverb. His efforts are detailed at a surprisingly funny and well designed site that includes samples of correct adverbial usage ("When James Bond was forcibly ejected from the aeroplane, he very fortuitously landed on a lorry that drove him straight to the bad guys' HQ.") and a form letter to famous writers asking them to donate adverbs to the cause. Now, if only someone could pull off a successful campaign to get politicians to stop referring to themselves in the third person...



#6
Rent.Net

www.rent.net

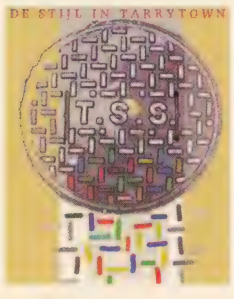
Claiming to represent over 1 million apartment units in the entire United States and selected areas of Canada, Rent.Net has emerged as a powerful online resource. Apartments are categorized by state, and some spaces are posted in cool, 360-degree photographic formats (through use of Omniview's photobubble software, acquirable at **www.omniview.com**). It's a great way to inspect rental space—without the hassle of pestering rental agents.



#7
Pumpkin Center for the Arts

www.pumpkincenter.com

This "unleashing of raw ego in a venue where it can do little harm" is the personal project of artist Russell Armstrong, and includes both galleries of his work and a section called Museum of the Ephemeral (MOTE)—the parodic catalogue of a nonexistent museum's exhibits and collections. Among the exhibits posted the last time we visited were: "Lens Cap Images," the works of a porn photographer-turned-artist who forgot to take the lens cap off his camera at an orgy, and "Aphorisms," light-box images (actually Java applets) executed by an artist who, "in the great workshop tradition of Peter Paul Rubens, supervises the execution of her works through the foremanship of Emilio and Rinaldo, her leather-clad elves." Anyone who's come into contact with museum curators, art critics or art historians will appreciate the parody: "These entities, indentured, as it were, by mat and frame, allow one to commune with inner images that have been barred from our consciousness...The highly charged sexual energy that writhed in front of Marcel Poke's lens cap has been magically transferred to these Cibachrome prints."



#8
On Stagnant Pond

lonestar.texas.net/~stanleym/index2.html

Long synonymous with bad taste, the pink flamingo (both real and plastic) gets some respect in the form of this exhaustive site full of flamingo facts, fun and frills. By far, the highlight of the site is the section "Dave the Lawn Ornamentologist's Tips for Spring." There, you'll learn how to get your lawn flamingos back in shape for proper display with step-by-step tips on refinishing, leg truing and, astonishingly, on head replacement (see photo right). For those of you who think pink flamingos are cheesy, you haven't seen anything yet; dig a little into the site and you'll discover an animated GIF of a flamingo dancing the Macarena.

#9
The Word Detective

www.word-detective.com

"Puzzled by Posh? Confounded by Cattycorner? Baffled by Balderdash?" Well, then you'll love Evan Morris's The Word Detective, an online version of the syndicated newspaper column. Morris answers readers and netizens' questions about words and language in a playful style. Recent topics included the origin of "lukewarm" and the connection between maroon (the color) and maroon (the act of stranding). If this sounds a bit too erudite for your leisure-time tastes, there's also an alphabetical index of words and phrases—so the next time someone calls you a big dumb "galoot," you can look up the word, memorize its history and prove them wrong.

#10
MX Bookfinder

www.mx.org/bookfinder/

Another entry in the ever-growing list of subject-specific search engines, MX Bookfinder hunts around the Web to see if a particular book (new or used) is available for sale online. While a trip to someplace like **www.amazon.com** might satisfy most of your online book-buying needs, this site should be a time saver for anyone with an interest in literary esoterica. We punched up Elizabeth Gouge (a fairly obscure author whose books are mostly out of print) and found that used copies of two of her novels were available on the Web. A search for Allen Ginsberg turned up a long listing that included limited-edition copies and signed works, not to mention some "legal size sheets stapled at the corner" printed by the San Francisco Poetry Center circa 1959, now fetching $37.50: "Folded in half, else fine."

MX BookFinder
your personal book shopping agent

Numbers on the Net

Sometimes we doubt the reliability of search engines. For instance, HotBot (**www.hotbot.com**) has a feature where you can search by "the exact phrase." We put it to the test by entering parts of popular clichés. We'll let you judge how well the search engine feature worked.

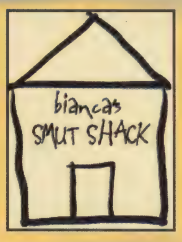
early to bed 1,105
look before 566,598
if it ain't broke 3,910
que serà serà 589
damned if you do 57,602
life's a bitch 1,161
early to rise 866
you leap 118,814
don't fix it 4,651
whatever will be, will be 901,648
damned if you don't 1,118
then you die 1,981,745

Bargain Bin

Bonds Cay, The Berry Islands
199.185.237.75/christie/Islands/Island048

While Lombard is a wonderful place to work, with the Yorktown Mall food court, the '60s-style ranch house suburban sprawl and the friendly Roosevelt Road White Castle, our staff has decided to relocate to a small island in the Bahamas. Yes, *IU* is moving. Unfortunately, we can't afford the new home that we've chosen. So we're asking you, the reader, to help us out in purchasing this bargain of an island. Bonds Cay, part of the Berry Islands, is a 550-acre chunk of land, with forest, fresh water holes, a sufficient shore for docking and enough room for a 3,000 to 4,000 foot airstrip. Would you believe that home sweet home is only selling for $7.5 million? We could settle for Umbrella Cay, a 48-acre island that's selling for $200,000, however, the property is under lease with only 58 years left in the 99-year contract.

Shack Under Attack



It may be the silliest lawsuit involving the Net since Miss King's Kitchens, makers of the original Texas YA-HOO! Cake, sued the search engine Yahoo! for copyright violation (the bakery has since been sued by the estate of 17th-century satirist Jonathan Swift).

Tandy Corporation, the parent company of Radio Shack (**www.radioshack.com**), the store that makes you surrender to a battery of questions before they'll sell you a battery, is threatening to sue Bianca's Smut Shack (**www.bianca.com**), a virtual community of love and sex forums and resources.

It seems the lawyers for the Fort Worth, Texas-based electronics giant are afraid that the Smut Shack sullies the good name of Shack (kind of the same way the late Billy Carter used to sully the good name of the 39th President). The Shacks have been firing legal salvos at each other since 1995, with Tandy's latest move being the blocking of Bianca's trademark petition earlier this year.

The case hinges on whether Radio Shack's customers, addled perhaps by being forced to give their mother's maiden name when buying a set of headphones, could confuse the Radio for the Smut Shack and vice versa.

If Radio Shack is successful, resourceful lawyers might want to take note of some of the other gross trademark violations on the Net. Here are some potential multimillion dollar cases: The Bucks County, Pennsylvania Home Page (**www.covesoft.com/Bucks_County/**) vs. Starbucks; Dan Sears: Photographer (**www.unc.edu/~dsears/**) vs. Sears, Roebuck and Co.; and The Z Shell FAQ (**www.mal.com/zsh/FAQ/toc.html**) vs. Shell Oil.

The Net Fetes Jackie Robinson

Those of our readers who don't live in caves should be aware that this year marks the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's debut in a Brooklyn Dodgers uniform as the first Black in professional baseball. The historic event, which had ramifications well beyond the sporting world, is also being celebrated at various spots on the Internet—from the sport behemoth sites of ESPN SportsZone (**espnet.sportszone.com/editors/gen/features/robinson/intro4.html**) and MLB@BAT (**majorleaguebaseball.com/jackie/**) to more personal sites like the Jackie Robinson Society (**www.utexas.edu/students/jackie/**) and Stealing Home: A Tribute To Jackie Robinson (**www.sound.net/~vivian/ jackie.html**). But there's one Robinson statistic you won't find at any of the above sites—his Bacon number. Yes, even Hall of Famer and national hero Jackie Robinson is linked to actor Kevin Bacon. A visit to the Oracle of Bacon (**www.cs.virginia.edu/~bct7m/ bacon.html**) reveals that Robinson starred with Ruby Dee in his own life story, *The Jackie Robinson Story*. Dee was in *Cop & ½* with Burt Reynolds, and Reynolds and Bacon both appeared in *Starting Over*. That gives Robinson, in addition to a lifetime .311 batting average and an MVP award, a Bacon number of three.

Good Lord No!

Anthony Michael Hall
www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/8093/amh.html

Wings Hauser
members.aol.com/die6die6/homepage/WingsHauserHome.html

Lisa Wilcox
www.ricb.demon.co.uk/lisa.htm

B. Spider Harrison, Johnnie Cochran, Jr. Look-A-Like
members.aol.com/tdoor2/spider/cochran.htm

Netspeak

"I guess I'm looking for what every guy is looking for, nothing fancy. Just your average bisexual, supermodel, gourmet cook, football fan."
—Comedian and bachelor Richard Jeni describing his ideal mate on Prodigy. Richard, might we suggest the Singles Nook on AOL?

"I really enjoyed seeing all my friends get attacked by the giant snake."
—Actor Eric Stoltz, on Prodigy, commenting about the highlight of working on Anaconda. *With friends like this...*

"No, I haven't, they are just big, fat lips! No gortex in there!"
—Darryl Hannah, on Prodigy, commenting about rumors that she's had lip-enhancing surgery. Gortex?

"I've had the same best friend since I was very young. And my best friend has always been Jesus Christ. My faith never allowed me to think about being the most successful model."
—The always astute Kathy Ireland relating the secret of her modesty on AOL. Hey Richard, look at this picture! Supermodel, football...do you think she can cook?

ACCORDING TO WWW.INTERNETSTATS.COM, THE PERCENTAGE OF WORLDWIDE USERS WHO ARE WHITE:

87 PERCENT

FROM THE SAME SURVEY, PERCENTAGE OF USERS WHO ARE AFRICAN-AMERICAN:

5 PERCENT

PERCENTAGE OF USERS WHO ARE HISPANIC:

3 PERCENT

THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE TYPICAL NET USER:

32 YEARS OLD

THE PERCENTAGE OF USERS WHO ACCESS THE NET VIA UNIX:

5 PERCENT

PERCENTAGE OF NET USERS WHO SAID THEY CONSIDERED THEMSELVES ON THE BRINK OF FINANCIAL RUIN:

33 PERCENT

NET LINE
INTELLIGENCE REPORT: NEWS FROM THE UNDERGROUND
Send news information or comments to: rob_bernstein@zd.com

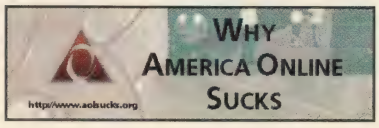
[More AOL Hacker Woes]

Miscreants Continue To Trouble the Online Service Provider

HACKERS, HACKERS, HACKERS. AOL CAN'T seem to shake 'em...In recent months, AOL has faced an embarrassing series of setbacks in their attempts to crack down on the system's predators.

On April 4, *New York Daily News* reporter Kenneth Li contacted the company's spokespeople, and walked them through a procedure for getting a customer's credit card number after a password is successfully obtained. Weeks earlier, AOL's security chief Tatiana Gau had told him there was no way this could be done—but hackers had provided the reporter with step-by-step instructions. A 37-digit URL pulled up the billing screen for a camera—and paying by credit card allowed access to the customer's actual credit card numbers. "Obviously, that's not the way the purchase process is suppose to work," Gau told Li. "It's an anomaly." And AOL plugged the hole.

Gau was hired by AOL at the start of the year for the high-profile security position "Vice President for Integrity Assurance." The week following his hire, AOL issued a press release about Nicholas Ryan, a Yale University student who'd



been found guilty under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act for stealing free time on AOL. Ryan was also discovered to be the author of AOL4Free, a home-grown software program that AOL conceded had been used by hundreds of hackers to gain free access to their system. "After detecting the illegal activity and assembling evidence against the hacker, AOL notified the Secret Service, which commenced an investigation culminating in today's guilty plea," AOL announced.

Still, on Feb. 10, Gau told AOL's "AOL Insider" column that "our members can feel secure knowing that we mean it when we say we have a zero-tolerance policy against bad guys." Four days after this announcement, the "Valentine's Day riot" hit—a much-hyped protest over busy signals in which over 300 ill-wishers descended on AOL's chat rooms, pulling disruptive pranks on other users, including the insertion of scrolling lines of distracting text (see **www.wco.com/~destiny/hacktran.htm**).

Three days later, "The Hub" was hacked. For half an hour, during which time the Hub hack was being repaired by AOL, users trying to access the AOL area received an unwelcoming screen that said, "You do not have access to this area." "When something is that wrong, you notice it,"

says Wendy Dubit, the Hub's director of Business Development. One subscriber, who made it to the hacked area before AOL technicians, mirrored the nasty message (**www.wco.com/~destiny/hubhack.htm**). "It was clearly a serious and a bad problem," Dubit adds, "but what's amazing is how quickly we took steps to identify it, stop it, rectify it and create a safer system."

But again in April, another AOL content area was hacked. According to one witness, on April 4, the words "Welcome to Dr. Gamewiz..." were replaced with a message taunting AOL security: "Tatiana Gau: What did you say about security?" (see **www.aolsucks.org/security.new/gamewiz.gif**).

Also last November, C|Net reported that AOL's CourtTV area had been hacked. Users looking for information about the O.J. Simpson civil case received a pop-up screen displaying the cryptic message "It's a PIC of OLAF" (see **www.news.com/News/Item/0,4,5712,00.html**).

But wait, there's more. On April 2, traffic to **heavensgate.com** was re-routed to **aolsucks.org**. Hackers had apparently spoofed an e-mail message to InterNIC, asking them to turn over control of the traffic to an ISP in South Carolina—which had instructions to re-direct traffic to James Egelhof's anti-AOL site in New York. "It made life very interesting for a lot of people that evening," Egelhof recalls. He says he appreciated the traffic—nearly 10,000 hits in a few hours.

—Dave Cassel

[No Way Out]

Net Users Speak Out about Frames, and why They Just Suck

NO MATTER WHERE YOU CLICK TO, YOU'RE trapped—stuck within the confines of some site's stupid framework.

Long after visitors are gone, these notorious pages (like **www.looksmart.com**) follow netizens around the Web, hawking annoying ad banners and beseeching "click here" announcements. A simple right click (for PC owners) can usually free users from their bondage.

For many tormented users however, that doesn't make frames any less bothersome.

"There is a vast group of people out there who think that frames are appropriate at all times, and have no idea how to use the technology," says Bev Moore, the disgusted author of Bev's I Hate Frames Page (**sac.uky.edu/~bymoor0/hatethem/hframe.htm**). Moore is just one of many perturbed netizens who have created Web sites to campaign against the use of the frame technology.

Anti-framers typically complain about: title-bar frames that don't resize, and permit only half of the frame content to appear in the provided space; bad outside links, which cause a framed site's main page to reload "ad infinitum"; slow download times; the spawning of new browsers each time a link is made; and the persistent crashing of Netscape 2.0 and 2.1 browsers. One anti-frame page, at **www.newdream.net/crash/index.html**, simply dares users to load his frame page—entitled "The Crash Site," it accomplishes just what it boasts, total shutdown of your entire OS.

"If you have frames on your page, it becomes confusing and takes away from the whole Internet experience," argues Erich Vokral, who runs the I Hate Frames Club at **wwwvoice.com/hatefrm.html** (no dot between the www and voice, thank you). "Having some inert page hanging around while you're trying to scroll down or link to another page is annoying. It's like that guy at 7-Eleven who's staring at you while you're looking for aspirin."

While there are many, like Vokral, who view the use of frames as simply irritating, there are others who are concerned that the technology is unfairly permitting sites to "steal" the online content of others. Currently, Total News (**www.totalnews.com**), a site devoted to cataloguing news information available on the Web, is in hot water with the *Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Time* magazine for framing content

within the Total News framework. Roman Godzich, President of Total News, says that most sites he's been in touch with have either thanked him or have actually requested to be linked to the site. The aforementioned companies however, have filed suit against Total News. According to Godzich, *Time* and the other plaintiffs aren't just offended by the frames: "They're saying that we need permission to link even if it's not in the frames."

For now, the Total News links that connect to the plaintiffs' sites spawn entirely new browsers, a clever way of circumventing the frames problem altogether. But that's almost as annoying as frames, maintain frame-haters. And as one might expect, there are sites that separately contend with that issue.

But that's a fight for another day.

—Rob Bernstein

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS SUBSCRIBED TO AN ISP:

1,850

THE VALUE OF ONLINE SALES FOR 1-800-FLOWERS IN THE PAST YEAR:

$4 MILLION

THE NUMBER OF NEW DOMAIN NAME REGISTRATIONS SUBMITTED EACH MONTH, APPROXIMATELY:

85,000

SOURCES: INTERNET STATISTICS (WWW.INTERNETSTATS.COM), NETINSIGHTS, INC (WWW.NETINSIGHTS.COM), ARE YOU ACTUALLY READING THESE TINY, ITTY-BITTY CREDITS?

[Love 'Em Previews]

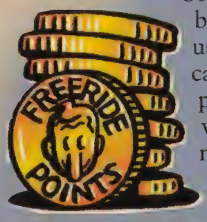
Get Your Fill of New Movie Release Trailers at Hollywood Online

COOL PREVIEWS, EDITED AND AIRBRUSHED WITH fantastic finesse by Hollywood marketing teams, can probably be charged with the suckering of filmgoers to the premieres of such films as *The Relic*, *Mallrats* and *Hellraiser IV: Bloodline* (an Alan Smithee production). Sure, they looked interesting as television ads and as movie trailers—no need to feel embarrassed, because we've all been duped before (I'm ashamed to say that I recently rented *Bulletproof* with Adam Sandler and Damon Wayans, and features editor Gloria Mitchell admits to having seen The Artist's *Under the Cherry Moon*). It happens.

The fact of the matter is, previews tend to look so darn awesome—the staff's anticipation *for Starship Troopers* is remarkable! If you can relate, then check out Hollywood Online's Trailers page at **www.hollywood.com/multimedia/indextrailers.html**. The previews are generally between 4 and 8 megs in size and can be downloaded by both PC (AVI format) and Mac (QuickTime format) users. Unfortunately, it'll take anywhere between five and 20 minutes to download a trailer, depending on your connection speed. But the advertisements for films like *Supercop* (Jackie Chan), *Scream* (Neve Campbell) and *Batman and Robin* are well worth it.

—RB

Freeride (**www.freeride.com**) has devised a way for Internet users to receive online service, gratis. By purchasing the products of Freeride sponsors (like Oreos , Wisk and Chef Boyardee) and by viewing online advertisements, users can earn points to win free monthly subscriptions to providers like Earthlink, First Internet Alliance and InfiNet. If you're struggling to pay for the pipeline, consider selling your soul to the ad man.



The Ultimate Freebie

On March 25, 1997, Austria went completely offline. Protesting a March 20 raid of an Austrian Internet Provider, ViP, the nation's ISPs shut down all local access to the Net. Apparently, ViP was raided because a former customer presumedly disseminated pornographic material to a Munich, Germany user back in 1996. So Austrian officials, just getting around to investigating the matter one year later, confiscated all of ViP's computers, even those not connected to a network.

Austria Goes Down

[Net Briefs]

The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), a group of Net experts responsible for developing standards for the wired world, recently convened in Memphis to discuss the future of cookie technology. Since Netscape 2.0, there have been cookie files on your computer. A program at visited servers can ask your cookie file to detect and record all sorts of information about your computer. The IETF will determine whether or not to limit the use of cookie technology by advertisers and marketers who use the captured information to learn more about you and your consumer practices. In case you were wondering, *IU*'s Web site at **www.underground-online.com**, is a cookie-free zone.

Will the Cookie Crumble?

Forever under attack, the tobacco industry is now taking a licking online. Pting! Congress has introduced a bill that would require tobacco companies to post warning labels on online ads. The labels would have to cover at least 33 percent of any particular tobacco banner. Failure to do so would result in a $100,000 fine (per day!) for each offense. The proposed law is currently under debate.

Spittoon Spat

[The Global Killfile]

Charged with "Cluelessness," Usenet Offenders Serve Hard Time in the Virtual Dungeon

IN THE HIGHLY CHARGED WORLD OF POLITICAL NEWSGROUPS, one man has found a way to deal with his most annoying newsgroup enemies—he throws them in the Dungeon (**www.math.uiuc.edu/~tskirvin/home/daemons/**).

Type in one too many nasty comments, expound a little too long about something he vehemently disagrees with, and Tim Skirvin is likely to sentence you to his Killfile Dungeon, where two Daemons watch over you during your stay.

"The Dungeon is a lot like how Alcatraz would be if it was still used for prisoners, and if tourists were allowed in," Skirvin, a 19-year-old computer engineering student, explains. "In it is held everyone from the most vile Usenet criminals to the most innocent bystanders, all held together by the common thread of having offended [me] at some time in the past."

Technically speaking, the Dungeon is simply a list of people who Skirvin has killfiled, or put a computer-stop to their postings and e-mail. Anytime someone's name appears who's been killfiled, the Daemons skip over the posting so Skirvin isn't bothered by the rhetoric.

"[It's] the place where I keep those people that I don't want to pay any attention to—they have to go somewhere, right?," Skirvin says.

For the "tourists" of the Web, however, it's a place to read an entertaining account of the all too common disagreements that make up many of the news and political newsgroups on the Net today. People who've been incarcerated in the dungeon have cells of information linked to their names—you can relive the argument that started Skirvin's disfavor, read the history of each prisoner's imprisonment and find out who's up for parole.

Skirvin created the Dungeon in the fall of 1994, just before his 17th birthday. He began by using two killfile programs, known as Daemons, to keep his prisoners from ever bothering him again. Over the years, the Daemons—named Nik and Kile—have taken on personalities of their own. They post to Usenet groups, make comments about the Dungeon and its prisoners, and even take appeals from prisoners who feel they've been unfairly treated.

Today, the Dungeon Web site offers a list of prisoners with links to each person's crimes and history, a timeline section about the Killfile Dungeon itself and a map of the place.

Near the end of 1995, Skirvin created the Global Killfile, after dealing with an oft morphing Dungeon prisoner by the name of John Grubor. The Global Killfile allows other people to download scripts and add them to their own killfiles. This way, others can avoid seeing the posts written by specific Dungeon prisoners as well.

"It's not so much a dungeon as a wanted poster," Skirvin explains. "The Global Killfile keeps track of those people that I fully think have nothing useful to say, but are loud. It's got killfiles in most major Unix formats."

Grubor is one of Usenet's most notorious posters—he's got more aliases than *The Pretender*, and he's been threatened with lawsuits for his behavior in various newsgroups. His alleged crimes

include mailbombing, harassment and spamming. There's a very large FAQ page about him at **kendaco.telebyte.com/dharland/Grubor.FAQ.html**.

"Grubor is the most annoying Usenet personality I have ever met, bar none," Skirvin writes in his Dungeon file. "To those of you reading this: Use the Global Killfile. Ignore Grubor. It's all worth it to ignore him. Trust me."

The Killfile Dungeon has housed more than 50 prisoners in its two-and-a-half year existence. Currently, there are 17 prisoners serving life sentences, two awaiting parole, and 31 who've served their time and been released. Only Grubor and Steve Boursy are part of the Global Killfile.

BJ Jesus (doghead@psyclone.com) is one prisoner who's been released. He was first sentenced to the Dungeon in February 1996 for a 21-day stint, and then served four weeks for a second offense in April 1996. He was charged by Skirvin with "purposeful obtuseness and annoyingness."

"I have truly enjoyed my time in Tim's dungeon," he says. "I think that Tim has the right to do as he pleases with his Web pages. I have no problem being imprisoned there. We have a distinct difference of opinions, and that's OK."

Other prisoners are not so polite in their descriptions of the Dungeon or its creator.

Bill Palmer is currently serving a life sentence in the Dungeon for "inducing others to sleep while attempting to read Usenet, continuously crossposting irrelevant threads..."

Palmer says he hasn't paid much attention to his being a prisoner, but respects anyone's right to killfile anyone he or she wants to.

"Tim of course has no more business bringing any 'charges' against a Usenet user than does anyone else," Palmer says. "Anything at all Tim Skirvin has of a negative nature to say about me stems directly from my challenging his imagined right to control newsgroup content.

> "[It's] the place where I keep those people that I don't want to pay any attention to—they have to go somewhere, right?"

"I don't have a very high opinion of Tim Skirvin. Further, as a controversial and well-known Usenet writer and satirist, I don't worry too much about 'anti-Bill Palmer' Web sites and newsgroups. There have already been quite a few of them," he adds.

But while Skirvin has many detractors—and fully expects to—he's got at least a few fans as well. He's had requests from Dungeon visitors to create Global Killfiles for other Usenet posters and has at least one admirer who lists him on a "favorite bookmarks" page.

According to Jaffo (**rampages.onramp.net/~jaffo/ links2.htm**): "The Internet is anarchy, perhaps the first place in human history where people rise to the top strictly based on merit. Status is determined not by political maneuvering but by technical skill and integrity. Tim is a rare gem on the Internet: a truly intelligent, helpful, worthwhile human being."

As for Skirvin's future on the Web, BJ Jesus has this prediction: "I believe that Tim is pushing to become a 'Net legend,' and is awfully sure of himself. He's young, his beliefs will undergo radical changes in the next 10 years or so. Either that, or some nutcase will choke the life out of him."

—Shawn Connally

It's a Phone Number. It's a Web Address. It's Both!

Are you sick of paying $50 a year to InterNIC just so you that can own some bizarre, unique domain name? Of course you are. If only there were a cheaper way. Well, thanks to the fine people at numbers.net, there is. For a scant $24 a year (plus a one-time $3 set-up fee), you can have a unique Web address, named after your home phone number. For instance, say a young lady named Jenny discovered that people were having trouble remembering her domain name "tutone.com." All she'd have to do is register at **www.numbers.net** for the address "numbers.net/800-867-5309."

Breast or Breast?

It's called CleanSpeak, and it'll wash your computer's hard disk out with a bar of soap. The new filtering software boasts a "sophisticated linguistic intelligence" that can distinguish between offensive and non-offensive uses of words like "breast." For instance, the software would not censor the word "breast" when used to describe a type of chicken or a kind of cancer. CleanSpeak (**www.inso.com**) apparently also provides the user with the option of replacing "obscene" words with "substitution characters." Personally, we think the program, which filters content using specifications devised by the Recreational Software Advisory Council, is a crock of $#@%ing $#@%. Enough with the censorware, already.

Net".com"petency

What's your Net aptitude? MCI has launched an online quiz at **www.nettest.mci.com** to measure users' ability to navigate the online realm. Factoring in the time spent searching for answers, your connection speed and the verity of your responses, the aptitude test is a silly, but fun diversion. Sample questions include "How many guest rooms are in the Thailand's Ambassador City Jomtien," and "How many sons did Genghis Khan have with his first wife, Borte?" Users are invited to take the test again and again, as questions are varied each time you tackle the quiz. We're proud to say that we passed with flying colors.

My name is Troy Brophy and...I'm...an online-game addict. There, I've taken the first step. After first overcoming my need to play SubSpace (**www.vie.com/sniper**), then later stifling the desire to log on to Blizzard's Battle.net for my Diablo fix (**www.battle.net**), I was feeling pretty good about myself. I was getting more work done, my social life was improving, I even started eating non-vending machine food again.

Then, early in April, I was hooked up with a VIP account on Engage, an online gaming network launched in mid-March. I was worried.

After experiencing some technical snafus, I was able to log on to Engage, although to this day I can't access the chat function. But who needs chat when there's a great selection of games to play? It turns out that most of the games include their own internal chat systems that let players communicate anyway. So I took a deep, pitiful breath and dove right in.

The first of seven games currently available that I "tested" was Rolemaster: Magestorm. Fans of first-person shoot-'em-ups will feel right at home inside this world. Players create characters and then meet in a communal tavern to arrange matches of up to 40 players and three teams. The game's sheer mayhem really got my adrenaline pumping. But what interested me most about Magestorm

[Is It Worth It?]

ENGAGE GAMES ONLINE

www.engagegames.com

was the friendly banter being exchanged during the game. Little unsportsmanlike conduct here. (When signing up with Engage, users are required to obey a Terms of Service that bans "indecent" language.)

Because the number of members signed on to Engage is relatively low, the service, for now, is inhabited by a group of usual (and loveable) suspects. Surprisingly, most Engage users stick with a particular game, which has led to the development of community with each title.

At press time, I was incapable of getting Descent to work on my machine, and I was surprised to find that I have to own a copy of Blizzard's WarCraft II to play that online (although plans are in the works for a downloadable version). Other games currently offered by Engage include: Splatterball, a family-oriented version of Magestorm; Castles II, a medieval multiplayer strategy game that allows for up to four players; and Darkness Falls, a rather sinister RPG.

The value of Engage really depends on the individual (doesn't it always?). Are you fanatic enough about multiplayer gaming to shell out $1.95 an hour? I've logged well over 40 hours on Engage so far. I can honestly say that I would kick myself if I had to shell out $80 for the experience. But as with any game out there, the more you play, the more engaged in the gaming world you become. If you have money to burn, I'd have to say that Engage is worth a try.

—Troy Brophy

[Attack of the Online City Guides]

A Slew of New Net Publications Hope to Target Local Markets

THE ONLINE CITY GUIDES ARE HERE, AND THEY WANT TO TELL you at what time that new Pauly Shore movie is playing at local theaters near you. Oh yeah, and while they're at it, they also want their cut of the estimated $66 billion worth of local advertising sold each year in the United States.

Right now, online advertising is still a relatively small market, with total U.S. online ad spending at an estimated $301 million in 1996, according to a study by Jupiter Communications. But the city guides foresee a rosy future. Even if the Web only grabs 10 percent of the total ad revenues, it's still a $6.6 billion market. And there's always the opportunity to steal a slice of the pie with the growing number of online transactions.

"It's the next generation of city media, combining distinctive local editorial with new technologies to deliver timely, comprehensive and customized insights that capture the essence of each city," says Michael Goff, editor-in-chief at Microsoft's Sidewalk, which has one city guide up already for Seattle (**seattle.sidewalk.com/**) and more on the way.

Problem is, everyone from newspapers to phone companies to television stations wants in on the local action, and there's not enough room. Just as most markets can only support one newspaper, or maybe two, they'll be hard-pressed to generate enough advertising dollars for multiple city guides.

Right now, the very similar guides are maneuvering to set themselves apart from each other. CitySearch (**www.citysearch.com**), one of the first major guides to hit the Web, bills itself as a complete "community resource," covering everything from community information and forums to arts and entertainment. Oh yes, and they sell cheap Web pages to small businesses to earn revenue.

Sidewalk has narrowed its focus to dining and arts and entertainment, while MTV's version is aiming for the even smaller local music-scene niche. And it wouldn't be right if AOL didn't put in its two bits as well. The online service hopes to point its 8-million subscribers in the direction of its Digital Cities subsidiary.

Cox Enterprises, a newspaper conglomerate, hopes to capitalize on the strong brand recognition of its local papers. But television stations have the same idea: NBC will soon provide local content for the Web sites of its 215 stations and affiliates, and media giant Time Warner is already all over that with CityWeb.

It's a crowded field, but don't forget the phone companies and the search engines. US West is online with DiveIn, Yahoo! features local guides to New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and other metro areas, and Excite is pushing City.net.

There's no question that a shakeout is coming, and only the players with compelling content and a sustainable business model will remain standing in the end—maybe. In the meantime, the existence of a large number of competitors in the city guide arena means you might just have more options for finding out about what to do, than things actually to do.

—Lars Hundley

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SOFTBANK ZIFF-DAVIS

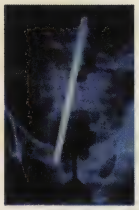
weird on the web

Frieda & Guido's Interactive Underwear

www.moosenet.com/iu.html

Interactive Underwear? The high concept at this site, run by California underwear aficionados Frieda and Guido, involves the wearing of undergarments — that is, undergarments previously worn by and then sent to Frieda and Guido by netizens. Naturally, pictures of the exhibitionists wearing the undergarments are posted to the page. OK, so the interactive element isn't quite that dazzling, but the gallery of "Undies But Goodies" and the unusual commentary that accompanies each shot ("The mere thought of 'Guido in a Speedo' seems to drive half of our Interactive Underwear readers into a cyber-tizzy") makes this site worthy of inclusion here. Note: The duo only accepts new and clean underwear.

Rectal Foreign Bodies



www.well.com/user/cynsa/newbutt.html

Also referred to as "Things People Have Put Up Their Butts," this site is a collection of articles from various medical journals that refer to "incarcerated rectal foreign bodies" and the attempts to extract said bodies. It's horrifying, but oddly fascinating, too—one article even includes a table that breaks down the different kinds of objects removed from rectums over the years: "Glass or ceramic," "Wooden," "Food." The "Food" category leads to an odd kind of vegetable popularity contest among the case histories—four carrots, three cucumbers, two onions, one parsnip. As the page counter here proclaims, visitors to this site are "sickos, each and every one-a ya."

The WWW bUrPaThOn

www.ozemail.com.au/~cammus/

You know those burping contests you used to have with your brother? Now you can have one with everybody on the Internet. The Burpathon solicits audio files from belching netizens; the collection, to date, maintains clips ranging from the tiny burp of "Angelic Heather" to the rumbling eructation of "X-treme Eric." More donations are requested, and the Webmaster mentions that "burps over two seconds" long are tax-deductible.

Sleestak!

www.geocities.com/Yosemite/6575/

Explore this page and its links for a bit, and you'll conclude, as did the page's authors, that the Sleestak monsters from *Land of the Lost* are among some of the most universally feared fictional characters of all time. But anyone who was freaked out by the appearance of Sleestaks in their Saturday-morning TV lineup can also find comfort here: The page points out that Sleestaks aren't capable of catching humans, because they "have not yet mastered walking only on two legs. This results in a top land movement speed of 4 fph (feet per hour). Also they wear slippery mittens."

Pooh Goes Apeshit

sv1pc44.cs.york.ac.uk/~james/pooh.html

Pooh is not happy. Tired of his Hundred Acre Wood neighbors, the once adorable teddy wreaks havoc on the forest in one of the funniest, most perverted takes ever on A.A. Milne's classic tale. "Pooh raised the axe once more and brought it down on the tattered remains of Christopher Robinson...Pooh giggled a little and wiped some saliva from his mouth with a shaky paw," reads the bloody tale. One by one, Pooh's unsuspecting mates are slaughtered: by drill, by poison, by suffocation.

Paul Fidalgo's Campaign Headquarters

www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2582/

Paul doesn't want just any old political office; he wants "God's job" and is campaigning for your year 2000 vote for Supreme Being of the Universe. At his Internet headquarters, you can look over his platforms: "I will eliminate drug use entirely, and instead make potatoes make you feel really groovy. I'll make it snow really hard whenever you don't want to go to work. I will grant Rush Limbaugh immortality, tie him down, and have him beaten with a fish for eternity, the fat bastard." You can also submit suggestions for campaign slogans like: "Half the calories of the leading deity, but with the same great taste!"

Putrid Afterthought

www.mayhem.net/mendoza.html

How can you dislike a site that promotes digital art so dreadful that it unwittingly and successfully parodies an entire medium? Electronic exhibits entitled Orgyscope, Genital Apocalypse and Silicon Desires display hysterically bad individual pieces with equally amusing names, like: "Et tu Death," "Barbie Wolf" and "Penus Venus." Naked bodies, animal parts and wallpaper eyesores make the site putrid indeed. OK, so art is subjective—personally, this stuff made us laugh our arses off.

Pot Bellied Men of America

www.potbelly.com

It takes a lot of time and hard work to build an impressive potbelly. Honoring men who maintain absolutely no regard for their own bodies, the Pot Bellied Men of America site features pinups, news and information and the "Man of the Month" award—given to some remarkably heavy guys. The site claims that its mission is to improve "self-esteem in its members." Come on, it's to justify your love of doughnuts. Ummm, doughnuts...sacrilicious.

The Bathrooms of Madison County

www.nutscape.com/~fluxus/

Visiting more bathrooms than covered bridges, the authors of this site tell a sordid true account of two lovers in Madison County. They drink large quantities of Diet Coke, take a lot of pictures and visit many different bathroom facilities. This romance is infinitely more entertaining than the similarly titled book by author Robert James Waller. Steamy, passionate and oh-so-relieving.

Skin Disease Weekly

www.pisspoor.com/skin.html

Subtitled "Better Hygiene Through Horror," this site simply features a different dermatological affliction each week, with attempted jocularity in the captions. The pictures are really too distressing to be funny (when we visited, the unhappy-looking members of an unspecified tribe displayed cases of elephantiasis). But if you're looking for a reminder that unprotected sex is dangerous, the archived page on venereal warts may be useful.

Dead Squirrel Net

www.uncg.edu/~asneal/subscrub/squirrel.html

Every so often, a site comes along that makes us feel a profound compassion for its author. Enter Dead Squirrel Net. The pitiful author of this page has such low self-esteem that he finds himself pressed to degrade decaying squirrels and post pictures of them to the Net. See a dead squirrel with a cigarette in its mouth; see a dead squirrel with little pirate figurines on its lifeless carcass; see a dead squirrel providing comfort to a weary Imperial Stormtrooper. It's not pretty, folks. This boy needs guidance.

Brian's Page of Antique Weirdness

www.teleport.com/~gumball/weird.html

Brian enjoys "old weird pictures," as he puts it, and his Page of Antique Weirdness is simply a collection of scanned-in artwork from other eras, organized into categories like "Whores," "Drugs," "Devils" and "Religion." (Our favorite, posted in the "Religion" section, was "Nun attacked by flying penis.") The pages don't always mention where Brian found the drawings, and there's no general discussion of, say, Victorian repression to put them into context, but the bizarre collection is worth a look, particularly if you like disembodied phalluses. Brian's site is also notable for its collection of other weird sites: He gives out a "Da Weird of da Web" award (it's sort of like this section of *IU*, as pronounced by someone from South Jersey or West Chicago).

enter at your own risk

www.clo.com/~chance/2see.html
Hands down, the most disgusting site on the Web. Do yourself a favor and ignore this URL. You have been warned.

Mannequin Lovers Homepage

www.pathcom.com/~bond/homepage.htm

We're huge fans of the *Mannequin* movies—so you can imagine our delight in stumbling upon this page, lovingly dedicated to those wood fiber and latex paint beauties. This site is run by the aptly named Mannequin Lover, who (it would seem) has a somewhat unhealthy obsession with these statuesque beauties. If you share a passion for this unusual fetish, there's a fiction archive (adults only!), mannequin research papers and, of course, a picture gallery.

American Flatulators

www.passgas.com

This site's a gas? Not really, but weird enough to deserve attention. The gag here is that American Flatulators, not Gladiators, battle it out with average Joes in contests involving passing gas. Powerful cheese-cutters, like Gaseous Clay and Ripper, do battle in games of biscuit floating (i.e., The Slippery Gauntlet). Of course, the site also offers plenty of sound bytes for those interested.

Cheese Factory of Fun and Love

members.aol.com/MojoRisenn/index.html

There's not much cheese at this site (at least in the traditional sense of the word). And there's no love to speak of, but there is plenty of fun to keep you clicking and laughing. Among the gems housed at the Factory: "Menudo Member of the Month," "Smurfs That Never Made the Show" and "Depressing Childhood Photo of the Month." There's a whole lot more to explore here, from Pepsi commercials to bad Web design to Frogger, and while the quality is somewhat uneven, the sheer quantity is impressive.

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illustration by Cyclone

11 THE TOP 11 LISTS

by the *IU* staff

People love lists. It's a fact. There's something just so authoritative about them. Say a bunch of random things and no one takes notice. But say those random things as a list, and all of a sudden there's order and meaning to the world.

Go ahead, try it.

But why do our lists go to 11? Any fan of *This is Spinal Tap* knows the answer: 11 is one better than 10. Even now that you know why the lists go to 11, you're probably still wondering about those bugs on the opposite page. We usually let the art speak for itself in the magazine, but in this case we felt you might need a little help interpreting the illustration. Take a second to count the insects depicted in the picture. In case you lose track, there are small numbers next to each bug to aid you in your effort.

Finished? Good. Hopefully, you counted 11 bugs. If you didn't, go back and try again. Got 11? See the connection? Now each of these 11 lists is made up of 11 sub-items. Simple, huh?

As for a unifying theme in this piece, there is none. This is what we in the publishing industry like to refer to as a fluff piece. It's made up of all sorts of odd tidbits that don't really amount to anything. Think of it as an editorial PuPu platter. But it's fun. And funny. So without further adieu...the Top '11s of 1997.

The 11 Most Offensive Web Site Designs

11. The Cookie Garden
www.cookiegarden.com/pastry50.html
A page put up by someone who doesn't know how to hide a meta field, and doesn't quite grasp the concept, either: "pastry are pastry. I love pastry. I want pastry. Give me pastry. Good pastry are for me. pastry are pastry. I love pastry. I want pastry. Give me pastry. Good pastry are for me. I love pastry. I want pastry..." You get the idea.

10. The Eternal Emperor's Homepage
www.geocities.com/Area51/Vault/3538/
Rule No.1: Until you master HTML, do not use embarrassingly grandiose titles for your home page. Perhaps a better title for this dull exercise in hypertext should have been "The Emperor's New Clothes"; the site is completely naked of any thought.

9. The Great Awesome Ultimate Goat Click Page!
www.hut.fi/~marje/goat.html
Here's a page that seems purposefully designed to be garish, and succeeds so well that we thought it worthy of mention. Big letters! Bright colors! A GOAT!

8. Undergraduate Students Page
www.cs.brown.edu:80/people/ugrad_faces.html
This remarkably moronic site has (count them) 122 images posted onto one page. Even surfing via a T1 line, it took us an entire evening to get the page to load.

7. Michael T. Hamby's Home Page
sacam.oren.ortn.edu/%7Emthamby/
OK, on the one hand, having too many colors and backgrounds and images is annoying. But Michael gets a bit too minimalist: On his home page, he used the same color for the background as for the links, so you can't read them (all two of them, that is).

6. Doctor Nerve's Markov Page
www.ingress.com/~drnerve/nerve/pages/interact/mrkvform.shtml
If you are looking for a truly unsatisfying interactive experience, jump over to this Markov Chain engine. Enter in any text you want, select the number of words (up to 1,000) you want back, and watch as the engine performs some amazing statistical analysis of your input. The results are stunning; your original text is scrambled and repeated! What fun!

5. A Beginner's Guide to HTML
www.csuglab.cornell.edu/Info/People/smunoz/main-index.html
Maybe the author meant to say: "A Beginner, Who Desperately Needs a Guide to HTML." If viewed as parody, the site could be considered amusing—instead, it's just a sad reflection of one man's poor HTML skills.

4. The Dark Side of the Lion Body
www.lionart.com/body.htm
Animated GIF hell. The page has dripping blood, glowing-eyed skulls, rampaging gargoyles, moving eyes and a mailbox that opens and closes, for starters—plus a background of bright flames and an incorrectly sized MIDI player image.

3. Bands On Parade
angelfire.com/pages0/rage/index.html
No wonder no one understands kids these days. The new thing is to slap black text over a mostly black background. If you make the effort to actually read the scrawl on this page you receive nuggets of teen wisdom like, "IF YOU ARE VISITING THIS PAGE AND YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT RAGE, 311 OR KORN...WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU???"

2. The New Java Flashes
gyros.pair.com/java/new.html
Here's a fine abuse of the frame utility. Twenty-five frames support one lame gimmick—a page that flashes like a disco floor.

1. Norm Weldon's Home Page
home.earthlink.net/~nweldon/
Along with the obligatory MIDI, this page has the quintessential tasteless tiled background: repeating butts! We actually kind of liked Norm (he writes *really weird* short fiction), but between the background, the barely readable buttons and the seemingly random images, we have to say his sense of aesthetics is truly twisted.

The 11 Best (?) "Ate My Balls" Sites

We don't quite understand the remarkable phenomenon, but we're fascinated by it nonetheless. These sites, of which there are hundreds, are little more than posted pictures of famous individuals discussing their craving for gonads. To give you an understanding of the craze, here are a few of the most notable Ate My Balls sites:

11. Monty Python Ate My Balls
theriver.ou.edu/~yak/balls.htm

10. Elmo Ate My Balls
lcovey.campus.vt.edu/elmp.htm

9. Heaven's Gate Ate My Balls
www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/1682/

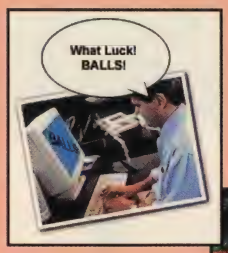
8. Gwen Stefani (No Doubt) Ate My Balls
www.fab.net/veloxi/gamb.htm

7. Rosco P. Coltrane (from *The Dukes of Hazzard*) Ate My Balls
www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/9111/rosco.htm

6. Humphrey Bogart Ate My Balls
members.aol.com/BOGIEBALLS/index.html

5. *The X-Files* Investigated My Balls
www.fab.net/veloxi/xfamb.htm

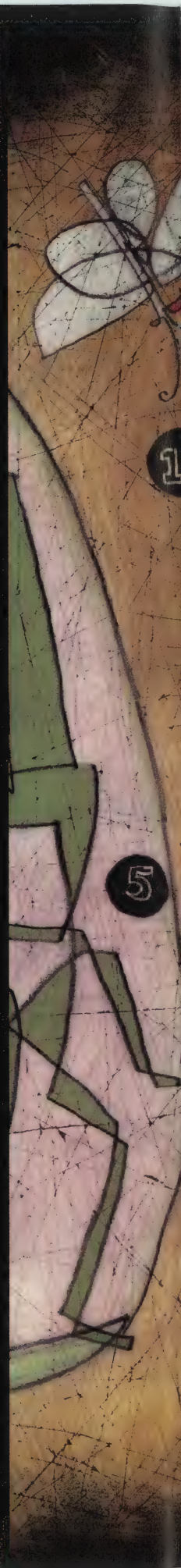
4. Ronald Reagan Ate My Balls **www-scf.usc.edu/~dheller/reaganballs/ronny.html**



3. Steve Case Ate My Balls
www.voicenet.com/~xavier/aol/ateballs.html

2. Alf Ate My Balls
bsuvc.bsu.edu/~jmhill/alfate.htm

1. The Original Mr. T Ate My Balls
www.cen.uiuc.edu/~nkpatel/mr.t/index.html



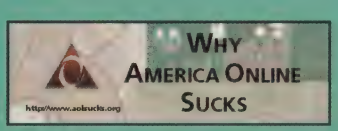
The 11 Funniest Sites Of All Time

11. The Mentos FAQ
www3.gse.ucla.edu/~cjones/mentos-faq.html
"It doesn't matter what comes..."The Mentos FAQ remains perhaps the single funniest example of obsession with minutiae on the Net. Now in its 6.0 incarnation, the FAQ has grown to almost ridiculous proportions, but thanks to better organization, it remains fresh as ever. The comedic crown jewel of the site remains the "commercial synopsis," in which all of the 30-second lessons in the power of freshness are deconstructed

("the passenger acknowledges the carefree youths with an approving glance as he speeds away. 'Wait till the wife hears of my brush with freshness!'"). Other funny bits include the debate over whether a single mint is a "Mento," the instructions for the proper way to eat Mentos and the "Freshspeak" glossary of Mentos jargon. FAQ fans, make sure you don't miss the Mentos Gallery at **www.karelia.com/mentos/** where packages of the Freshmaker are incorporated into classic works of art.

10. Fertnel
www.fertnel.com
We've covered Fertnel in these pages before, but if you haven't seen it already, go—it's one of the funniest Web parodies we've come across. From "Ask the Snack Scientists" to "The Industrial Accidents Korner," this fictional snack manufacturer's site is a perfectly twisted version of the real thing: "No food products or food by-products company can claim to have 100% insect parts-free food...Frankly, if we had to stop everything every time a little roach or a fly landed in one of our steaming vats of cheeze by-products, it would keep us from stocking the shelves of your local grocery with the vast assortment of snacks you have come to love."

9. Why America Online Sucks
www.aolsucks.com
The irate guys who run this page are not taking any prisoners. The page is funny not so much for its heated diatribes against the targeted service provider (which are amusing), but because of the lengths the site goes to in order to expose AOL's alleged shortcomings. For instance, the authors of the page have posted a number of supposed stolen AOL employee e-mails that they somehow came to possess; these convincingly real e-mails tell a tale of internal strife at AOL headquarters



continued on p 28

Top 11 Most Overused Internet Metaphors and Motifs

11. Surfing
Examples: Yahoo!'s Surfers' Picks, Wired's Net Surf, Spyglass' SurfWatch, countless commercials and magazine covers.
The "surf the Net" motif most likely owes its roots to channel surfing, although both sitting on your couch flipping through channel after channel and sitting in your desk chair clicking through site after site are diametrically opposed, activity-wise, to actually trying to catch a wave...just ask Greg Brady.

10. The Information Superhighway
We have Vice President Al Gore to thank for this infamous analogy. While Gore probably had no idea what kind of Pandora's Box he was opening up when he first uttered this magical phrase, ever since we've had to endure a legion of reports about all the road-kill, speedbumps, potholes, traffic jams, carjackers, pit stops, etc. that populate the infobahn.

9. Spiders
Examples: Webcrawler, the WWWeb, InContext Spider, Arachnid Software's WebPower
An obvious one; after all, it is called the Web. Still, we're wondering why the whole Web as a woven fabric metaphor never took off.

8. Exploration
Examples: Magellan, Netscape Navigator, Time Warner's Pathfinder, Microsoft Explorer, Quarterdeck WebCompass
This metaphor works better than most, as individual users are in a sense exploring the new territory of the Internet. Interestingly, both Netscape and Microsoft subscribe to this metaphor for their main Net product—the innocuous-sounding browser.

7. Sites Starting with "S"
Examples: Salon, Suck, Salt, Scrawl, Serf, Shift, skew, Skug, slack, Slate, Smart, Smash!, Smile!, Smug, Spank!, Speed, Spew, Spire, Spiv@, Splay, STET, Stim, Stuff, Svelte, Swoon
So much so it spawned an entire Yahoo! category. The only rules seem to be it must start with an "s" and be no longer than five letters. By the way, still up for grabs are smelt, salad and sieve.

6. Coffee
Examples: Sun Microsystem's Java, HotJava and Java Beans, Borland International's Latte, Symantec's Café, Applix's Espresso, Natural Intelligence's Roaster, IBM's Arabica and Argus Systems Group's Decaf, DataViews WebXpresso
The whole idea, which started with Java, is that these products will wake up your Web site like that first Starbucks grande skim latte of the morning. More often than not, though, they cause your browser to crash like a college kid who's been up all night drinking pots of Kroger's House Roast.

5. Song and Dance
Examples: Marimba's Castanet and Bongo (three points), ClariNet, Tango
The idea here is to name your company or product (or both!) after something kinetic and exciting like a musical instrument or a dance step. Still, there's a subtle art to it. Names budding cyber entrepreneurs may want to avoid: Sousaphone, Waltz and Oboe.

4. A seeming cesspool of child pornographers, death cults, schemers and anarchists

3. Push-Pull
All this time we were consuming information and never knew whether we were pushing or pulling. Thank God that has finally been cleared up. Pulling is when you seek something and pushing is when it seeks you. Wait, that's not right. Pulling is when you actively find something and pushing is when something finds you. No, that's not quite it. OK, got it, pushing is when more of the same old dreck is hoisted on you, assaulting your senses, and pulling is when you seek out some of the same old dreck to assault your senses.

2. Coolness
Examples: Cool Site of the Day, Project Cool, Yahoo!'s Cool Sites, Netscape's What's Cool?.
This one started by accident, with Glen Davis picking the adjective "cool" to describe one noteworthy site a day. From there it mushroomed to the point where today, if you don't have a cool site, well, brother, why bother? As uncool a moniker as cool might be, we can all be thankful that Davis had the foresight not to name his project "Swell Site of the Day."

1. CB radio
Let's see: On the Internet, you can book airline tickets, find the connection between Kevin Bacon and Bea Arthur, chat with a housewife in Bangladesh about endocrinology, look at dirty pictures, find the lyrics to "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" and buy and sell stocks. On a CB radio, you can talk to truck drivers and well, talk some more to truck drivers. What a powerful analogy!

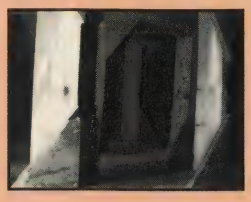
The 11 Best Wastes of Time Online

11. Sending heated e-mails to Congress and other politicos. See the displeased dispatches at **www.annoy.com**.

10. Listening to Dallas Cops talking on their radios live at AudioNet (**www.policescanner.com**).

9. Reading the ultraviolent, but absolutely hysterical, adventures of "Mark700." (**www.buylink.com/m7/m7home.html**).

8. Grooving to '80s tunes at the '80s server jukebox (**www.80s.com**). Be warned—it costs $4.95 per month.



7. Submitting an enraged entry about your boss to **www.angry.org**.

6. Reporting on supernatural events stirring under June Houston's bed, as viewed through the Ghost Watcher camera (**www.flyvision.org/sitelite/Houston/GhostWatcher/index.html**).

5. Searching for jobs you have no intention of taking, or reading the résumés of people you have no intention of hiring.

4. Discovering what wondrous phrases your name can spell via the Genius 2000 anagram server (**www.genius2000.com/anagram.html**) Also in Italian (**www.mclink.it/personal/MC0006/anagrams/anagrams.htm**).

3. Playing with the Bill Gates-O-Matic, a terrific Shockwave game that lets you transform the corporate behemoth into a viking, space jockey or drag queen (**www.lasvegassun.com/comdex/gatesomatic.html**).

2. Chatting with Eliza, your artificially intelligent friend (**www-ai.ijs.si/eliza-cgi-bin/eliza_script**).

1. Playing with Virtual Bubblewrap (**www.mackerel.com/bubble.html**)—the greatest waste of time in the real world is also the greatest waste of time online.

11 Random Searches Observed at Magellan's Search Voyeur

(voyeur.mckinley.com/cgi-bin/voyeur.cgi)

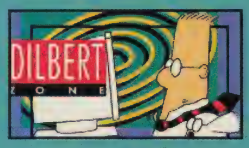
The Magellan Voyeur allows users to anonymously peep at what other anonymous users are currently plugging into search engines. Here's what we found one fine afternoon. Man, you people are pathetic.

11. TEMPLATES FOR FAKE I.D.'S
10. Big Boobs
9. for love not lisa
8. MR PORK CHOP
7. c
6. light bulb jokes
5. 'woman looking for young man'
4. brest [sic] milk
3. autopsy photos
2. the last american virgin
1. life of barbara eden

that includes hacker troublemakers, security mix-ups and difficulties with employees who've been remiss in their duties. If you're one of 8 million AOL users, the site's a great place to commiserate with others about the sometimes troublesome service. And if you're not a member, well, the site's a great place to go to receive affirmation in your choice of provider.

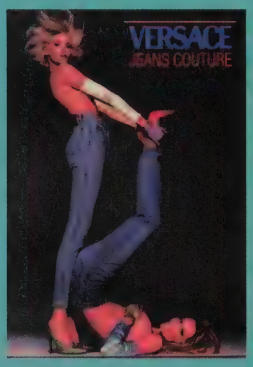
8. The Dilbert Zone
www.dilbert.com

Any list of top films of all time is probably going to include a couple of perennial picks like *Citizen Kane*, so don't immediately write us off for including The Dilbert Zone on our roster; the simple fact is it's funny. Yes, occasionally things that are very popular are also very entertaining (think *Seinfeld*). Beyond the obvious draw of the site, an archive of Scott Adams' always amusing daily strip, there are a number of distractions just perfect for that mid-afternoon break from work. Our favorites: The puzzles for management, which include such brain teasers as the Jumble (unscramble: residentP illB lintonC) and Television Anagrams (RE), and the Dogbert Oracle, where all your deepest questions are answered by Dilbert's wise canine companion. Yes, it smacks of commercialism (there's an extensive catalog section) and it's disgustingly popular, but as long as it stays funny, we won't begrudge Dilbert's success.



7. The Gallery of Advertising Parody
www.dnai.com/~sharrow/parody.html

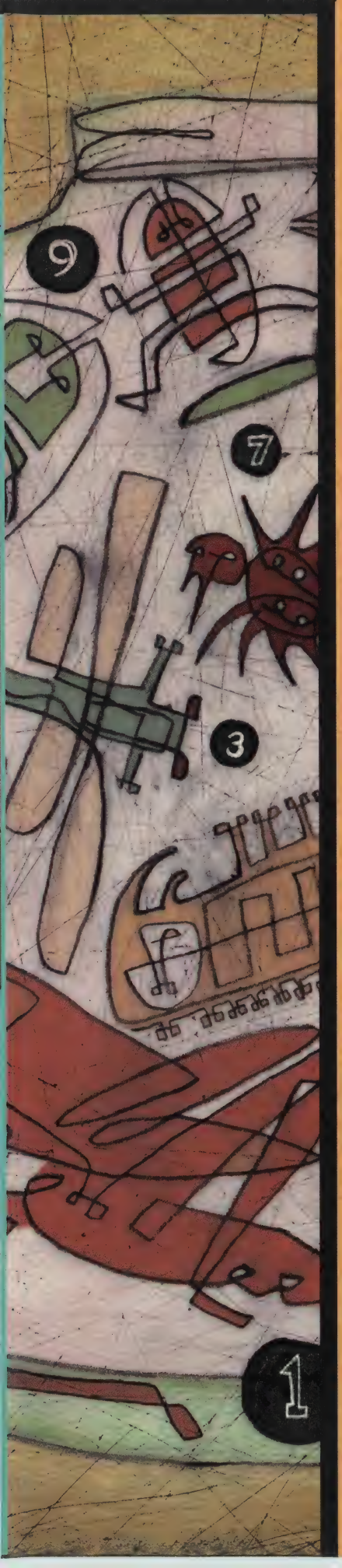
Celebrating the bashing of bad ads, this gallery encourages users to take "potshots" at the industry and submit parodies of the most offensive, moronic or just plain lame advertisements out there. Most of the entries on the site, which are about as subtle as the snout of Joe Camel, are absolutely terrific: See Shoot-Me-Up Elmo, Nunweiser Beer and the remarkable anti-smoking ad. Also, become part of the Design Police, who hunt down the worst in, yes, design. "Current citations have been issued to McDonald's Happy Meals and FedEx." It's all in good fun. Unless of course, an ad you've created is parodied at this site. In that case, you're hatin' it.



6. Internet Oracle Resource Index
www.pcnet.com/~stenor/oracle/index.html

The Oracle is just what the Internet ordered: a huge group of people trying to amuse and entertain each other for the hell of it. Questions are e-mailed to Oracle users, who then get a crack at answering as incarnations of the omniscient Oracle. The best answers are selected by the Oracle Priests, "a hardy and loyal band of volunteers," for posting on the newsgroup rec.humor.oracle—and now on the Web, as well. At this site, you can read (and vote on the worth of) past "Oracularities," submit your own ques-

continued on p 31



11 Net Movies That Should Have Been Made

These films didn't quite make it into production, but we think they could have been Hollywood blockbusters.

11. *Broken Link 2—Electric Boogaloo*
A couple of street kids (Shabba-Doo Quinones and Boogaloo Shrimp Chambers) who own the Web address www.breakdancing.com, can't afford to pay their InterNIC renewal fees. Realizing the value of such a "fresh" address, a large new-media corporation plans on stealing the URL the minute InterNIC puts it back up for bid. Shabba-Doo and Boogaloo's only hope of saving their site from appropriation by the man is by winning a local breakdancing contest with the most crazy dope routine of all time.

10. *Lorenzo's URL*
A mother and father (Susan Sarandon and Nick Nolte) are heartbroken to discover that their son (Jonathan Taylor Mary Kate Ashley Olsen Thomas) has developed a seemingly incurable addiction to the Internet. Despite the gloomy predictions of the experts, the parents manage to save their son by hauling him out to the park, where he's thrilled to meet an actual real-live girl.

9. *Project Active-X*
Jimmy (Matthew Broderick), a troublemaking would-be new-media product manager is placed in charge of a rag-tag team of Active-X programmers. Shocked by his own corporation's vile treatment of the programmers, who are forced to work life-threatening hours to compete against the opposing Java programming standard, Jimmy defies direct orders and releases the captives from their cubicles. A thrilling, life-affirming film with an animated climax that's not to be missed!

8. *403 Forbidden Planet*
In the year 2525, Adams (Leslie Nielsen), InterNIC agent #3044, is sent to the location of an apparently inaccessible server deep in space. There, he finds Dr. Microbius (Walter Pidgeon) and his daughter Altavista (Anne Francis), the sole survivors of a mysterious and unstoppable cyberorganic virus. What amazing secrets has Microbius found encrypted deep in the server's subdirectories?

7. *Stop! Or My Mom Will Reload*
Meet Joe Bomowski (Sylvester Stallone). He's no ordinary cop. He's a cybercop, assigned to the San Francisco Computer Crime Division. Meet Tutti (Estelle Getty). She's no ordinary mom. She's Joe's cybermom, who packs heat and a whole mouthful of witty geriatric jokes. Together, the wildly matched pair take on an Internet child pornography syndicate in a hilarious buddy-cop romp for all ages.

6. *My E-Mail With André*
An experienced programmer (Marc Andreessen) sends a series of seemingly interminable e-mails to a fascinated newbie (Wallace Shawn). He writes about his life as a millionaire and makes fun of the guys who used to beat him up in grade school. Moviegoers can see a beta version of this film for free, if they don't mind the projector going out as soon as anything like a plot starts to develop.

5. *Webmaster 2: Through the Portal of Time*
In this explosive sequel to *The Webmaster*, a freak rift in the continuum sends an HTML warrior, Dar, (Marc Singer) back in time to a world dominated by ruthless barbarians and conniving warlocks. The Webmaster, however, brings his own brand of sorcery to the raging contest of good versus evil. Establishing a LAN and a connection to the World Wide Web, Dar hooks up an outmatched tribe of gentle ancients who use the "magic" technology to link to the Anarchist's Cookbook Online. Once there, the primitive tribe members learn how to fashion bombs out of ordinary household items.

4. *DOS Boot*
The lives of 39 men hang in the balance when a system crash on a prototype submarine leaves them stranded on the ocean floor. Their only hope lies with an ex-Microsoft-employee-turned-seaman (Herbert Grönemeyer). With no tech support to rely on, it's a race against time to achieve a clean DOS boot.

3. *Fatal Attachment*
A married New York lawyer (Michael Douglas) starts sending steamy e-mails to an exotic woman he meets in a CompuServe forum (RuPaul). When he breaks off the exchange, his rejected correspondent retaliates by sending him an anonymously re-mailed message with a "Trojan horse" attachment that turns his hard drive into rabbit stew.

2. *Rear Windows 95*
Confined to his apartment with a crippling case of carpal tunnel syndrome, a freelance Web designer (James Stewart) spends his days looking at random searches on the Magellan Voyeur. When his girlfriend (Sandra Bullock) stops by with the news that software mogul Bill Gates has been reported missing, he recalls the mysterious search string "win95 AND duct AND tape AND liposuction AND jenny AND mccarthy." In the dramatic climax to this dizzying nonstop thriller, a major earthquake is caused by Alfred Hitchcock spinning in his grave.

1. *AOL Girls Are Easy*
When three visitors from outer space (led by Jeff Goldblum) accidentally strand themselves on planet Earth, the first place they go to seek help for their ship's repair, and for a piece of the universe's finest XXX action, is AOL's Member Chat forum. There, they meet Valerie (Geena Davis), a lonely manicurist who helps them acclimate to the confusing chat world and its wacky language of emoticons and acronyms. The film is LOL funny!

11 Plug-Ins That Should Be Developed For Your Browser

11. Taco Bell's Proprietary Plug-In
A Taco Bell offering that employs Vicinity's Interactive Map utility to aid users in finding a "Taco Bell lunch spot near you." Using cookie technology and user input, the plug-in's "Bell chime" signals that a run for the border is in order.

10. Scratch & Sniffer
A utility that allows you to smell the Net in all of its malodorousness, and create your very own .snif files (SNIF89a format). Coming soon, the Scratch & Licker—makes snozberries taste like real snozberries!

9. Strunk & White Plug-In
For those who are fed up with the poor spelling and grammar so common at Web sites, the Strunk & White Plug-In incorporates *Elements of Style* into the visited page's HTML code. Grammatical errors are marked in red and e-mailed to the author automatically.

8. The Helium Gasser
Get a giggle out of the gasser, a plug-in that uses complex algorithms to remix all audio broadcasts to sound like annoying frat boys discovering helium for the first time.

7. Key Locator Plug-In
Do your keys wind up in the most unlikely of places? Using GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) technology, the locator plug-in maps out directions within a 3-meter radius of your keys. Currently in beta. Sometimes mistakenly locates bees, kegs, kayaks and lobsters.

6. The Smut Bar
A great compromise in the raging online porn debate, the smut bar loads filthy JPEGs and GIFs, but covers the "good bits" of the image with the famous Black Bar of Censorship. Discourages children from repeat viewing of pornographic content through tortuous application of "The Frustration Theory."

5. Porno-Maker Pro Plug-In
For those who are only interested in pornographic content, the Porno-Maker Plug-In actually inserts dirty XXX GIFs to all visited Web pages. The Pro version of the plug-in ($194.99), inserts images from Porno-Maker's ultra-raunchy members-only server database.

4. Subliminal Affirmation Plug-In
Feel good all over! While you're browsing, the SAP flashes self-affirming frames of text so fast that they're undetectable to the human eye. Sample messages include: "You are a good person," "She dumped you because your good looks were too intimidating" and "Your breath smells wintery fresh."

3. Comedic FaceSaver Plug-In
When a site that aspires to be funny doesn't quite make the grade, Comedic FaceSaver spawns a new browser that splices its own code into the original HTML, transforming the site into a virtual laugh factory. Version 2.1 will include a De-Gallagherizer which kills all references to the so-called "comedian" from any file.

2. Taser Plug-In
You no longer have to worry about surfing at work. The Taser plug-in fires off real 620-Volt taser rounds from your computer's 3.5" floppy drive, rendering your boss, or anyone who catches you visiting a morally questionable site, unconscious while wiping out their short-term memory. (OK, we were getting desperate for plug-ins at this point.)

1. The Gong Show Plug-In
A virtual Jamie Farr sounds a loud RealAudio gong every time you enter a site not worth viewing. (Gong ratings are decided by an independent panel, though Webmasters are invited to upload avatars in an attempt to wrestle the mallet from Jamie's hands.)

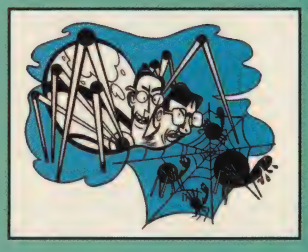
11 Domains Webmasters Shouldn't Write Home About

11. www.planet-nasty.com
10. www.tampax.com
9. www.eatme.com
8. www.lustangels.com
7. www.buttsville.com
6. www.cockring.com
5. www.virginity.com
4. www.masturbate.com
3. www.crabs.com
2. www.adultsextropolis.com
1. www.impotence.com

tion or volunteer to answer queries from "Can you tell me how a microwave running Windows would work?" to "You know what I hate?" Truly clever stuff, and volumes of it.

5. Heckler Online
www.hecklers.com
Following the success of the *Star Wars Trilogy* rerelease, the *Porky's Trilogy* is also being rereleased in theaters nationwide. At least, this according to Hecklers Online, an amusing amalgamation of jokes, feature writing and dirty limericks. Perhaps the best and most unique thing about Hecklers is its interactive games section where users can partake in the laugh-making process. "Alliter-8-tion" challenges users to construct an alliteration about a weekly updated topic (when we last visited, Arsenio was being alliterated into oblivion). And "3-Line Novels," a section devoted to brevity in writing, asks users, "Can you sum up a book's worth in 3 lines or less?" There are at least eight other interactive sections at the site, all generating guffaws by you, the audience.

4. Stale
www.stale.com
Stale is a one-shot that gives *Slate* editor Michael Kinsley and parent corporation Microsoft a nice Stooges poke in the eye. It is without a doubt the best executed parody site on the Net, aping the over-hyped electronic zine to a tee. Haven't seen *Stale* yet? Well, as the editor of the publication explains, the magazine demands to be read. "Ignore us now, but sooner or later *Stale* will be bundled into your operating system." Particularly amusing is the "In Other Magazines" section, which also gives it to other newsstand publications like *Penthouse*, *Teen Beat*, *Newsweek* and *Time*. "*Newsweek* puts Dilbert on the cover with Michael Johnson in the corner box. *Time* puts Johnson on the cover with Dilbert-eared Ross Perot in the corner box." Suspicious, eh?



3. Zippy Meets Meta-HTML
www.metahtml.com/apps/zippy/welcome.mhtml
The Zippy filter was dreamt up by the folks at Universal Access, Inc. as an experimental run for their server scripting language, Meta-HTML. It livens up the Internet experience by inserting random quotes from Bill Griffith's surreal syndicated comic "Zippy" into any page you visit—and any link you follow thereafter. We stopped by our virtual home office, ZDNet (**www.zdnet.com**), for some advice on computer products and got: "Supercharge your copy of Adobe Photoshop with the right plug-ins. HOORAY, Ronald!! Now YOU can marry LINDA

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Gone, But Not Forgotten—11 Fabled Sites That Have Faded into the Ether

11. Bob Allison (last seen crawling at **gagme.wwa.com/~boba/**)
One of the original arbiters with his huge Spider's Picks list of sites, nowadays Bob is just another "File Not Found."

10. Babes on the Web (stood up at **www.toupsie.com/BABE.html**)
Controversial, colorful and definitely not lacking in hubris, Rob Toups' boorish collection of online "babes" hasn't been updated since February of last year.

9. Highway 17 Page of Shame (stuck in traffic at **www.got.net/~egallant/the_road.html**)
Emil Gallant took a daily picture of a "jerque du jour"—basically, someone driving like a moron—on his commute along the Bay Area's Hwy. 17 and posted it on the Web. A new job less than 10 minutes from his home meant commuters all over the world would lose this virtual outlet for their universal frustrations.

8. Dan's Gallery of the Grotesque (d.o.a at **www.grotesque.com**)
Med student Dan Blumenfeld created this storehouse of horrific images as a way to desensitize himself and make visitors come to terms with what real violence looks like. That mission completed, the photos live on only in the collective subconscious of netizens.

7. Make James Earl Jones Speak (no longer resonating at **www.tiac.net/users/nolan/jej/**)
An amusing site where users could pick from a menu of words cut from some the esteemed actor's most famous lines ("People will come, Ray," "This is CNN," "I am your father") so that Jones would spout phrases like "Ray, I am CNN." Amusing to everyone but Jones' lawyers.

6. The LegoWars Homepage (deconstructed from **rhf.bradley.edu/~xero/Lego/lego.html**)
Once as well-crafted and visually enticing as space LEGOs themselves, this site used to be the home of an elaborate set of rules for conducting "LegoWars." In 1995, LEGO decided that too much fun was being had and instructed the site creators to cease and desist. A text-only version of the rules has somehow survived on the site of a German theology student at **www.lrz-muenchen.de/~ctw/txt/legowars.txt**.

5. Candy Land (we're not going to even bother to print the address because we still get e-mail asking for it. For the love of God, people, the site is closed).
This repository of information about bomb-making, lock-picking and drug-growing run by the mysterious Candy Man suddenly disappeared last year like Veruca Salt down the bad-egg shoot.

4. Walter Cronkite Spit In My Food (see the way it *is* at **www.dnaco.net/~timh/walter1.html**)
A humorous and heavily embellished tale about the former CBS anchorman hocking a loogey right on the Webmaster's plate apparently did not amuse "the most trusted man in America."

3. UWP Lyrics Server (last singing at **uwp.wit.org/music/lyrics**)
This storehouse of lyrics for thousands of songs was silenced by oh-so-many copyright lawyers, an unfortunate increasing phenomena on the Net.

2. The Point (point your browser to **www.pointcom.com**)
The service was the butt of many jokes on the Net, and within these pages, for awarding blue ribbons seemingly at random and then calling honored sites the "Top 5% of the Web" (they were rotten at math too). The Point was swallowed up by Lycos, the ribbons slowed down and the jokes stopped being funny.

1. **Mirsky's Worst of the Web** (rotting at **mirsky.com/wow/wnews.html**)
Started in response to all the "cool site" mania, Mirsky hoped the site would "eventually lead to financial independence and greater creative opportunities." It didn't. In addition, he says, "publishing The Worst was new and fun in early 1995, but 22 months and over 1,500 selections later, I'm no longer excited by it. I'm feeling creatively stifled and I'm generally tired of writing about the Net."

The 11 Best Snack Foods to Surf By

The four factors considered when ranking the best foods to surf by include: caffeine, calories, cost and fat. The lower the nutritional value, the higher the ranking. Some foods may contain one or all of the above criteria.

11. Pork Skins/Funyuns

Surfing the Web has its down time (download time?), and part of the reason snacks are essential is to keep you entertained during the wait. Sometimes, though, you're just not able to keep forcing food down, which is where fried pork rinds (or, for vegetarians, Funyuns) come in. They're salty, flavorful and crunchy—but they're mostly air, so they won't fill you up too fast. Pork Skins lost a few points on the list because the bag we bought contained no artificial color, flavor or preservatives. What fun is that?

10. The Drinks: Ecto Cooler; Jolt; Mountain Dew

It's a three-way tie for the surfer's drink of choice. While none of the liquids have any fat content, all three hover in the 100-120 calorie range. Ecto, which doesn't have any caffeine, wins points for concept originality and for surviving in the competitive drink market 13 years after the theatrical release of *Ghostbusters*. Jolt remains unchallenged as the king of caffeine, while the Dew is the most academically well-rounded of all soft drinks. Honorable mentions go to: Sunny Delight, Grape Nehi and Lime Slurpee.

9. Milk Duds

Low blood sugar is a hazard for the sedentary surfer. Aside from the 21 grams of sugar and 4 grams of fat per serving, Milk Duds triumph over other candies because picking the chewy caramel out of your molars helps to pass the ever-increasing download times on the Net.

8. Oreo DoubleStuff

When Nabisco says, "Twice the Filling," they mean it. A single serving of DoubleStuff will cost you 11 percent of your recommended daily intake of fat—unless you plan on just eating the filling, in which case it'll probably only cost you 10 percent. Oreo loses points for not having any cholesterol, and even more points for boasting as much on their packaging.

7. Easy Cheese

Even the most anal-retentive user can enjoy online snacking thanks to aerosol-propelled cheese. No cracker crumbs and oily fingers here; simply pop the nozzle in your mouth and enjoy a tangy jet of creamery-smooth cheese product. It will be necessary to look elsewhere for the remaining 88 percent of saturated fat to round out your daily intake, however.

6. Pop Secret Popcorn

Popcorn is a healthy snack. That is, unless it's slathered in "Movie Theater Butter." Yes, that's right, regular butter isn't fatty enough for Betty Crocker, who instead offers an artificial substitute that rings in at a price tag of: 19 percent of your daily value for fat! High sodium content (12 percent of your daily value) and a deceptively wholesome look and feel combine for a winning surf-time snack food.

5. Slim Jims

We grew up under the nutritional regime of the Four Basic Food Groups, one of which was headed "Meat." Even though the Food Groups have been discredited now in favor of that pyramid thing, we still feel that some good old animal protein every now and again is important. But raw meat has this tendency to sit in our refrigerators until it goes bad—so bad that it's too gross to actually clean and we have to go get a new refrigerator. The answer to this problem, of course, is Slim Jim brand Smoked Snacks. They keep for months, and they've got the special tang of sodium nitrate to boot!

4. Instant Ramen

What kid wouldn't go nuts for the great taste of deep-fried noodles softened in hot water? Throw in five dried peas and a healthy dose of MSG and you've got an irresistible lunch treat! It's hard to wait three minutes for those 13 grams of fat and an impressive 59 percent RDA of sodium. Special bonus for the continued use of a Styrofoam cup (which is also shrink-wrapped and encased in cardboard).

3. Hostess HoHos

Hostess has long been the king, or maybe we should say the queen, of the American snack food industry. HoHos, in addition to being marvels of food engineering, pack 380 calories and 28 percent of your daily fat needs into each serving. And we have to admire the inventiveness of whoever came up with the names for HoHos and Hostess' other quality bakery products: Ding Dongs, Twinkies, SnoBalls and SuzyQs. They all sound like they'd be *guaranteed* to rot consumers' teeth.

2. Swanson's Hungry Man Dinner

We know how it happens. While downloading files from **alt.binaries.erotica** you realize it's been over 16 hours since your breakfast of little chocolate donuts. Don't panic! You can easily make up an entire day's worth of snacking with one Swanson Hungry-Man meal. Packing a whopping 95 percent daily value of saturated fat as well as 80 percent DV of sodium, the Country Fried Beef Steak gets you back in the game. And with a minimum cook time of 13 minutes, you can download one more modified pic of Gillian Anderson.

1. Hostess Fruit Pies: Apple, Cherry, Blueberry

Who would have guessed that the innocent looking, cherry-filled Hostess fruit pie, with its adorable pie-guy mascot, could be capable of being such a snack food monstrosity? Aside from all of the artificial cherry goo inside, we're not quite sure what makes the 4.5-ounce pie so dense with fat (a 34 percent DV, and a whopping 470 calories per serving). But it tastes so artificially good.

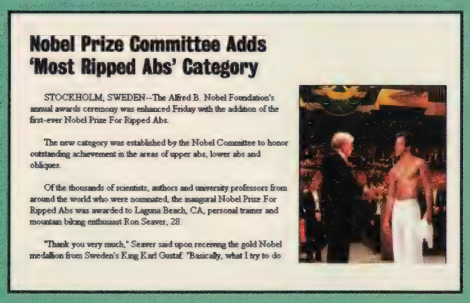
RONSTADT too!!" Just what we wanted to hear! The Zippified House of Representatives site (**www.house.gov**) offered the "opportunity for you to be a part of re-inventing the government. A can of ASPARAGUS, 73 pigeons, some LIVE ammo, and a FROZEN DAQUIRI!!" With the relentless corporatization of the Web, we're glad Zippy's around to keep surfing fun.

2. The WWWF Grudge Match
www.lightlink.com/grudge

Remember the scene in *Stand By Me* where Vern and Teddy argue about whether Mighty Mouse could beat up Superman? Take childhood conversations like that, add an unhealthy knowledge of pop culture and a somewhat warped sense of humor and you have The WWWF Grudge Match. Every couple of weeks a new match—ranging from a street brawl between Mr. T and Mr. Clean to a contest between Sam Malone and the Fonz over who can seduce Melissa Etheridge to a road rally pitting KITT against Herbie the Lovebug—is posted, and the site's creators, Steve and Brian, then set the scene and offer their predictions for the outcome. This being the age of interactivity, however, Netheads get the final word by casting their vote along with their own commentary. Inspired writing, a full archive of past matches and consistently funny and inventive rivalries make this site an all-timer.

1. The Onion
www.onion.com

The Onion, quite simply, is the funniest site on the entire Internet. For the uninitiated, *The Onion* is a Madison, Wisc., weekly satirical newspaper; about



Nobel Prize Committee Adds 'Most Ripped Abs' Category

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN—The Alfred B. Nobel Foundation's annual awards ceremony was enhanced Friday with the addition of the first-ever Nobel Prize For Ripped Abs.

The new category was established by the Nobel Committee to honor outstanding achievement in the areas of upper abs, lower abs and obliques.

Of the thousands of scientists, authors and university professors from around the world who were nominated, the inaugural Nobel Prize For Ripped Abs was awarded to Laguna Beach, CA, personal trainer and mountain biking enthusiast Ron Seaver, 28.

"Thank you very much," Seaver said upon receiving the gold Nobel medallion from Sweden's King Karl Gustaf. "Basically, what I try to do

70 percent of its weekly content is put online. The writing at *The Onion* is brilliant. Witness some random recent sample headlines: "Nobel Prize Committee Adds 'Most Ripped Abs' Category," "Ad Industry Veterans Honored With Cola War Memorial," "Rules Grammar Change: English Traditional Replaced To Be New Syntax With" and "Flavor Crystals: A Generational Battleground." If each of those headlines don't make you chuckle, there's something wrong with you. Besides the hilarious news sections (make sure you don't miss the News in Brief section), check out "Justify Your Existence," where bands are asked to do just that, and the excellent syndicated material like "Savage Love" and "Red Meat." Wisely, *The Onion* online doesn't stray at all from the successful formula of the print edition. When the writing is this sharp, you don't need any bells and whistles obscuring the content.

With grunge and alternative on the wane, the music industry is gambling that techno artists like Moby, Prodigy and Chemical Brothers will be the next big thing.

It all started in a warehouse somewhere. Maybe in Detroit, where a DJ started making people dance to electronic music he'd invented on his home computer. Or maybe in Chicago, where somebody played a disco record really fast on one turntable and snippets of Latin and African soul music on another turntable.

Then, who knows, maybe somebody in the sweaty crowd was from London, and flew home to tell her friends what she'd seen. Or maybe somebody else sent a telegram. However it happened, British kids started opening their own warehouses in the '80s, speeding up and slowing down the electronic beats and using computers to change the sounds. Somehow, by 1990 or so, these huge British rave parties had spread to Los Angeles, then New York City, then San Francisco.

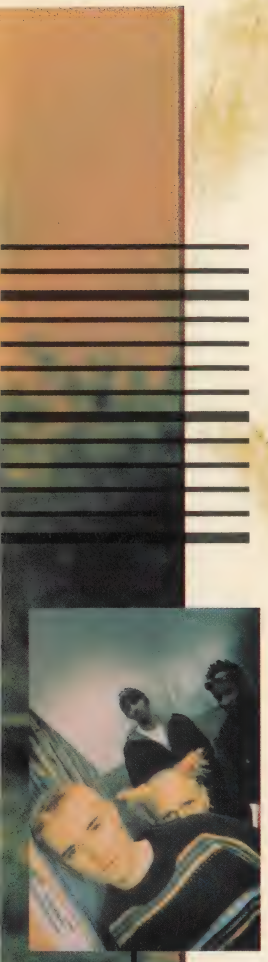
But on the Internet, Electronica has long been..

ctr..All the Rave

Electronica's Elite: Chemical Brothers (opposite) Prodigy (above) and Future Sounds of London (right).

by Steve Knopper

“Everything else has been tried, so why not electronica?



After that, they quickly multiplied. Today, it seems like every city, from Merrillville, Ind., to Minneapolis to Boulder, Colo., has a secretive all-night dance party on any given weekend—all you have to do is look for it. How did they get inland, from big cities to the rural areas and conservative Midwestern towns? “I think it’s all word of mouth on the Internet,” says Moby, a techno musician who played countless rave parties before branching into punk and rock the last few years. “I think it’s been hugely influential. I honestly don’t think the American rave scene, or dance scene, or whatever you want to call it would exist without the Internet. It’s the grapevine.”

“Electronica”—a media-invented word to encompass techno, rave, ambient, jungle and all the subgenres of electronic dance music (see sidebar, page 39)—is the first major music trend to develop significantly over the Internet. Rave parties aren’t virtual, of course: They exist because kids, like their disco-loving forebears, want to dance all night to loud, repetitive music. (And their poison of choice is usually ecstasy, or maybe LSD or pot, instead of beer.) But the easiest way to find a rave is to check the secret “map points” on various Internet pages, from Alaska’s Digital Underground (**www.techno.org/sventek/main.htm**) to the Manchester, England’s Bowlers Nightclub (**www.talk-101.com/topaz/life/**).

In the old days, visiting revelers in Detroit took years to transport their ideas to London, Los Angeles or wherever else they lived. The Internet has woven regional rave scenes together into a sort of highly opinionated international community. Today, good techno bands can build a buzz and pack clubs and parties around the country without selling any albums. Even rock and hip-hop, which also have major Internet presences, rely on traditional concert promoters, record companies and radio stations to stay afloat. Rave culture owes its widespread global existence largely to the Internet.

“People can communicate directly with each other rather than relying on opinions from *Spin* magazine or whatever,” says Moby, the techno alter-ego of New York City resident Richard Melville Hall, who was an avid Net user before giving up his account about two years ago. “When someone from Tulsa can write to someone in Sacramento and say, ‘I saw this really amazing thing last night, go see it when it comes through,’ I think that’s really exciting.

“It is such a computer-based genre,” he adds, “because most of the people making the music and listening to the music are all such techno geeks and they all have Internet accounts.”

There must be a lot of them. After the big record companies’ overall sales flattened out last year—after years of coasting to record highs on the strength of alternative rock, country and rap—executives started flailing desperately for a new trend. MTV, too, decided to shift its priorities away from alternative rock and partially toward electronic dance music. So “electronica,” even though it has been flourishing underground for years, with occasional minor hits by Prodigy or Orb, wound up being touted as “The Next Big Thing to Be.” Based on the success of Prodigy’s smash MTV single “Firestarter,” and Chemical Brothers’ *Dig Your Own Hole*, which debuted at #14 on the *Billboard* charts in April, techno, rave, drum’n’bass and jungle music started getting the full-hype treatment in newspapers and magazines.

“(The hype) is irrelevant,” says Sami Khoury, a partner at Orbitrecords (**www.orbit records.com**), a small company which handles lesser-known techno bands such as .x09 and Cumulonimbus. “This sort of thing is more of a self-fulfilling prophecy than anything else. The growing interest in techno-culture has been spurred on by a number of things—*20/20*’s recent report on raves, Microsoft’s use of the Chemical Brothers track…Large record company execs are looking for some way to boost low sales. Everything else has been tried, so why not electronica?”

The “Will electronica be big?” debate, aired prominently in *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly* and many other mainstream publications, has led to

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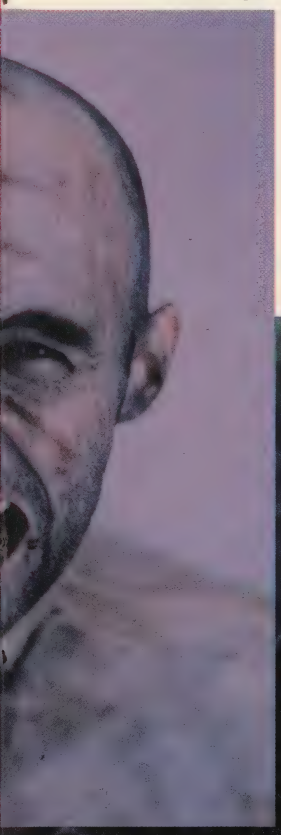
Rave Diggers: NYC's Moby (left) and the UK's Spring Heel Jack (right)



much Internet hand-wringing. Every few days in **alt.rave**, some disgruntled Chemical Brothers fan will turn on his heroes, saying they sold out to the man. The recent backlash parallels Seattle rock fans' early-'90s disgust when their favorite bands, Nirvana and Soundgarden, started selling millions of records and showing up on frat-house CD racks. Suddenly, Chemical Brothers, Prodigy and the rest are above ground, no longer the sole domain of secretive rave-dwellers.

But in some ways, for such die-hards, this recent techno hype is even worse than the Seattle stuff. Techno has been prominently played at nightclubs and rave parties for eight years, and there's no clear reason why it didn't become lucrative for record companies in 1992 instead of 1997. Many dance-music followers are cynical about techno's recent surge into the commercial mainstream; they say reaching for the big money will destroy good bands and their respective scenes.

The Artists

Aphex Twin. The alter-ego of British studio knob-twiddler Richard James, Aphex Twin is sometimes hard-rocking (which is when James gets good) and sometimes at least as slow (and bland) as Orb. You'll want 1992's *Selected Ambient Works '85-'92* if you have incurable insomnia **(www.elektra.com/ambient_club/aphex/aphex.html).**

Chemical Brothers. Will the nerdy-looking but talented Manchester, England duo (formerly the Dust Brothers, not to be confused with Beck's producers) be rock stars? That's the big question, now that the nerdy-looking duo's second album, *Dig Your Own Hole*—and its hip-hop-heavy single, "Block Rockin' Beats"—has been released just as MTV shifts from alternative rock to electronic dance music **(www.caroline.com/astralwerks/Chemical/chemical.html).**

Brian Eno. While everybody else in the '70s was obsessed with disco or hard-rock guitar chords, Eno was trying to make the weirdest noises he could make with high-tech studio gadgets and kitchen appliances. A key producer for King Crimson, John Cale, Talking Heads and U2, Eno's strange sounds indirectly inspired a generation of techno musicians **(www.hyperreal.com/music/artists/brian_eno/).**

Kraftwerk. Pioneering German band which made some of rock's first fully electronic albums, including 1974's *Autobahn* and 1977's hypnotic classic *Trans-Europe Express* (FAQ at **sun1.gham.ac.uk/busbykg/kraftwerk/FAQ/).**

Moby. One of the first true techno "stars," this Darien, Conn., native started out making purely electronic music, but then broadened his vision to include funk, punk, rock and metal. His genre-crossing 1995 album, *Everything Is Wrong*, was a huge critics' favorite; this year's *Animal Rights* was more uneven and earned less attention **(www.hyperreal.com/music/artists/moby/).**

Orb. A slooooow (or "ambient") spin-off of the British '80s house band KLF, known for psychedelic light shows and a prominent sample of pop singer Rickie Lee Jones saying overly cutesy things in *Little Fluffy Clouds* **(www.orblivion.com).**

Orbital. Brothers Phil and Paul Hartnoll have been rave heroes since their first electronic singles, including 1990's British hit "Chime." Using house, techno and rave beats, they're capable of making a classic catchy pop instrumental like "The Box" or more difficult experiments with jungle and drum'n'bass like 1994's long, slow *Snivilisation* **(www.rise.co.uk/orbital/).**

Prodigy. Essex, England brainchild of Liam Howlett began as an informal group of friends DJing at parties. When the parties got bigger, so did Prodigy, which scored a minor hit with "Charly" in the early '90s. You might know Howlett as the ugly punk guy inexplicably scraping his devil-shaped mohawk in last year's MTV smash "Firestarter" **(home.sn.no/~amarum/).**

Spring Heel Jack. Duo of British producers who remixed the band Everything But the Girl's 1996 album and made it sound hip —they continue to pioneer busy, rhythmic drum'n'bass music **(www.island-independent.com/springheeljack/).**

—SK

"How Prodigy finally got on American MTV, at the absolute rock bottom of their 7-year-old creative career, can only be explained by one thing: money," says Mike Brown, one of three Webmasters who has run the exhaustive techno music-and-culture site Hyperreal (**www.hyperreal.com**) for the past five years. "They're getting the promotion dollars. They didn't make a good record ('Firestarter'), they made a lousy record. It's not even a good dance record. It's crap. 'Macarena' kicks its ass."

Brown, a Meat Beat Manifesto and Orbital fan, has slowly turned Hyperreal from a low-tech labor of love into the most respected techno resource (and server) on the Web. Its links, to ambient acid jazz and other related music pages, are superb; the Global Rave Information Database covers a surprisingly large chunk of the United States and beyond; the alt.rave FAQ is thoughtful and opinionated; and there's lots of information about prominent rave-party drugs, and whether they're dangerous or illegal.

Still, Brown, a 25-year-old Dayton, Ohio, resident, disagrees with Moby's assessment of the Internet's importance to the culture. "I don't think the Internet has been all that crucial in promoting techno music, and it certainly didn't create it," he says. "Dance music has been flourishing in the underground continuously for decades. I think people in this dance culture like to think that the Net has been kinder to their scene than to others—but realistically, there has always been a far bigger, more active, and generally more informed community of rock, jazz, classical and even hip-hop heads on the Net.

"Even with the rave information, you'd be surprised how many kids don't get their information from the Net. The people are out there, they're going to parties and to clubs and dancing to the music, they're picking up fliers for more parties, they're reading the fringe magazines, they're going to the import shops and they're listening to each others' records. The Net could disappear tomorrow, and the scene would still be there."

In contradicting Brown, Frank Davis, the Internet director for Caroline Records, which owns the Chemical Brothers'

Genres

Ambient. Slow, atmospheric style that can put you right to sleep if you're not carefully paying attention. Like New Age music—yes, Yanni, even—only set to more interesting drum machines and electronic noises **(www.hyperreal.com/ambient/)**.

Drum'n'bass. Techno music with skittering drum machines quickly shifting from slow to fast. Spring Heel Jack's 1996 album *68 Million Shades...*is the pure example; such hip-hop artists as DJ Shadow and the Beastie Boys (not to mention Everything But the Girl) have experimented successfully with the style. Good critical analyses by the *Village Voice*'s Robert Christgau and others at **www.island-independent.com/springheeljack/cmp/reviews.html**

Dub. A futuristic extension of reggae, in which Bob Marley-style melodies take a back seat to throbbing bass and overamplified drum machines. Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, and Bill Laswell are the pioneers; Mad Professor and Dub Syndicate have helped merge the style with other types of electronic music, such as drum'n'bass and ambient **(www.seacoast.com/~c/)**.

Electronica. The umbrella term, recently used by media and record companies in their quest to identify the "Next Big Thing," for techno, house, rave, drum'n'bass, jungle and other types of heavily electronic music.

House. In the early '80s, warehouse DJs in Chicago and elsewhere sped up disco, funk and Latin records and stretched them into one long, sweaty dance groove. Originally associated with hip-hop, house has wound its way into the songs of all kinds of not-so-underground artists, from Madonna to Suzanne Vega. It's still the main backbone of any rave-party soundtrack **(www.housenation.com)**.

Jungle. To create jungle rhythms, London DJs in the early '90s accelerated hip-hop "breakbeats" and fused elements from both rap and rave/techno/house music. Early creators include Art of Noise and 808 State; other examples are Prodigy's "Charly" and Smart E's much-maligned novelty single "Sesame's Treat," which sampled the familiar tune from the PBS kids' show **(red-branch.mit.edu/~ian/jungle.html)**.

Rave. Used more to describe underground parties than any specific type of music. Beginning in the outskirts of London around 1987, rave parties gained a seedy reputation in the mainstream for the prominence of ecstasy and other hallucinogenic drugs. But they're really just discos in big warehouses, where a kid can dance all night without having to deal with alcohol or showing ID (newsgroup: **alt.rave**, FAQ: **www.hyperreal.com/~mike/pub/altraveFAQ.html)**.

Techno. Began in the early '80s in Detroit, with DJs mixing Kraftwerk and Parliament-Funkadelic songs into long electronic dance grooves; gained a foothold at late-'80s London rave parties; it quickly splintered into countless subgenres, including proto-techno, acid-house, ambient, breakbeat and jungle. Used now as a general term, like "rock," to incorporate all the differing styles **(www.techno.org)**.

Trip-hop. Hip-hop played slower, more hypnotic, with prominent bass and thudding drums. Tricky, ex-member of the British band (and production team) Massive Attack, is the best-known rapper in the genre. (Portishead's spooky, jazzy 1994 alternative-rock hit "Sour Times" also got lumped in this category.) Web trip-hop CD sales: **www.x-radio.com**. Information on acid jazz, techno's funkier, jazzier alter-ego: **www.cmd.uu.se/AcidJazz/**.

—SK

Astralwerks label, may in fact be proving Brown's point. Davis credits the Web for a great deal of the rave culture's size and prominence; in fact, he says, the Web gives record companies a secret password to discover new techno bands in remote areas. "There's this opportunity to sit down on a mailing list or a newsgroup and find out about literally every piece (of new electronic music) that's coming out," Davis says. "Not that everybody could take that all in—but there's just the sheer ability to hear about this great piece of some guy in Guadavistock mailing out DAT tapes from his basement.

"You've got a lot of (record company) A&R guys out there who are monitoring these lists going 'Hmm, this guy in Podunk, Iowa, is causing a big buzz. Nobody from a major label would look for a guy in Podunk, Iowa, but everybody on the mailing list is going, 'Yeah, I know this guy.' So suddenly this A&R guy will take a trip to Podunk, Iowa."

For rave-party purists, who wish they could keep their scenes "underground" even as the Internet links it to users around the world, such record company encroachment is nothing short of sinister.

Kids, like their disco-loving forebears, want to dance all night to loud, repetitive music.

But usually, the worldwide exposure has more practical effects. Hyperreal's Brown recalls a friend who started an Internet mailing list looking for outdated, abandoned music-making machines, like old synthesizers. The idea took off: "You could be from Iowa and post on this list about some obscure garage sale synthesizer that doesn't work right, and someone from New Zealand will offer to not only fix it for free, but will also tear it down and modify it so that you can use it in a totally new way," Brown says. "It brought the gearheads and the musicians together."

Back in the mists of time, a conservative bureaucracy deprived British teenagers of music that they wanted to hear. That bureaucracy was the BBC, and its monopoly was smashed when pirate radio ships dropped anchor around Britain and started beaming in their signals. Some obscure college bands calling themselves The Rolling Stones, The Who and The Kinks got their start through pirate radio, and British music was transformed from a global embarrassment to a global industry.

by Charles Platt

Bands And Bandwidth

Customize and Download Your Next CD Over The Net

Today, in the United States, a conservative music promotion and distribution system is just as firmly entrenched as the BBC used to be, and it's almost as hostile to innovation. Small, independent labels have a terrible time getting their music aired, distributed and displayed.

This time around the obvious answer is to use the Net—but so far, no one has figured out the best way. The Internet Underground Music Archives (no relation to this magazine) offers digitized songs, but artists have to pay to put their music on the IUMA site. Other services such as RealAudio allow you to listen, but only in real time; you can't download and store the music, and the quality generally sucks anyway.

Now, finally, a new technology could potentially blow the system wide open. Anthony Stonefield, a 34-year-old independent producer, has launched Global Music Outlet, a Web site that actually gives the user what they want.

Go to **www.globalmusic.com** and browse through 20-second song samples for free. Hear something you like? The next step is to register using a credit card number. Then you can download a free copy of Electric Record Player software that will run on your Pentium PC or PowerMac (other systems not supported). Electric Record Player will play songs that you download from the Global Music site for a mere 99 cents each.

The downloading process is painlessly fast because Stonefield has an exclusive license from Bell Labs to use their new compression scheme, Perceptual Audio Coding (PAC). This is three times as efficient as MPEG-2, squishing sound files to 4.5 percent of their normal size. A four-minute song takes about 10 minutes to download via a 28.8 modem and fits into 2MB of disk space. This means you can store more than three hours of songs on a single Zipdisk.

Once you've got 'em, they're yours to keep and play as many times as you wish, and you'll find that the quality is indistinguishable from a CD. But who wouldn't be tempted to make copies for friends? Now we come to the tricky part. Your free copy of Electric Record Player software is personalized for you, and each song that you download is also personalized so that it only plays on your copy of the software. If you make bootleg song copies for your friends, you'll have to make a bootleg copy of the software to go with them.

Well, of course, you can do that—but this will also enable your friends to log on at Global Music Outlet and download more songs at your expense, using your credit card number! Hmmm...so maybe you'd rather keep the songs you've downloaded, and tell your friends to buy their own.

Yes, this is a sneaky kind of copy protection, and it can probably be hacked (although who would bother, just to save 99 cents a song?). The point is, though, that serious artists and major labels will never let their music on the Net so long as the product can be ripped off wholesale. For this reason, Anthony Stonefield is adamant that his copy protection scheme is essential—although, "We tried to find a balance," he says, "between severe security and user friendliness."

Even so, the major labels are still cautious—because if they sell directly to a minority of Net users, they risk angering conventional distributors serving the mass audience. Also, they're afraid of "cherry picking"—the natural tendency of consumers to download just the best cuts from a CD at 99 cents per song, and not bother with the rest of an album. "But cherry picking is good for the customer," Stonefield points out, "and that means ultimately it should also be good for business." He's trying to communicate the concept that since the Net slashes distribution costs close to zero, record labels can offer far more artists, far more cheaply—and still make far more money. They don't have to think in terms of limited retail shelf space anymore.

Stonefield's initial song catalog is esoteric, specializing in African artists such as Zulu rocker Johnny Clegg of Juluka, plus several acts from Peter Gabriel's WOMAD Select label—besides oldies by crowd-pleasers such as Foreigner, Christopher Cross and Carole King. Todd Rundgren has agreed to offer new music, and one way or another, by the end of the year Stonefield hopes to have 10,000 songs online.

Meanwhile, he's pursuing a parallel venture: the "Jogman," a portable music player that will be totally solid-state, storing music on memory cards in PCMCIA format.

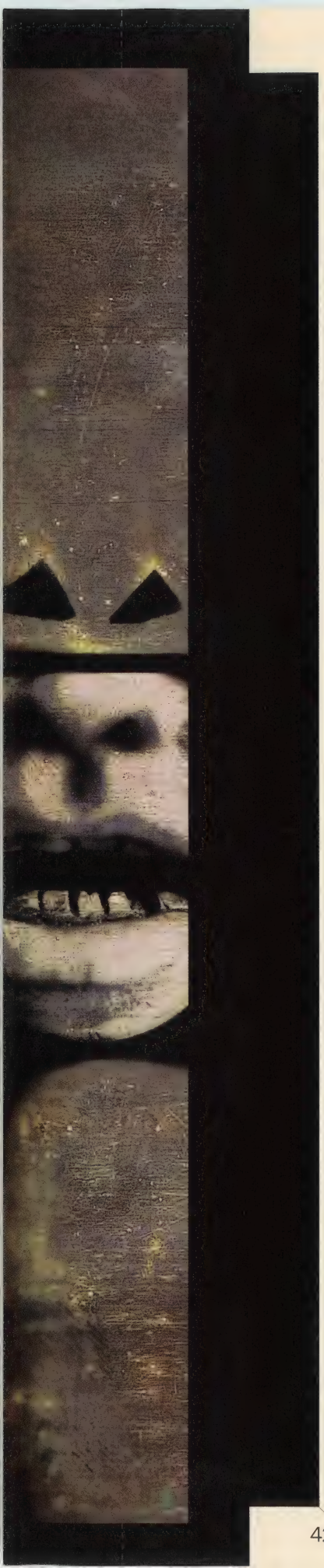
First you'll wire your Jogman to your PC and copy to the Jogman the PAC-compressed songs that you previously downloaded from Global Music. Now you're ready to go, and because the Jogman is totally solid-state, it's impervious to all forms of motion.

AT&T already has a palm-sized prototype that will store 40 minutes of music on one PCMCIA card. It should sell for maybe $300 once the PAC format becomes more widely used. PAC is the only compression scheme powerful enough to cram enough music onto the memory card.

Stonefield had no previous background in computers when he boldly called AT&T and asked for an exclusive on their compression technology, and now he's running his own startup with the modest intention of "breaking the promotion and distribution bottlenecks that have stifled the music industry since the 1970s."

Of course, the record business will tell us that it's doing a fine job, and everything that's worth listening to is already right there on the racks at your local music store.

Maybe so. But now we have a chance to find out for ourselves—and the result just might be a whole new revolution in rock.



FAQ

Where Sticks and Stones Are Thrown, And Words Hurt Like All Hell.

Flaming is not for Flame War Zones for the weak of heart.

by Rob Bernstein

Pregnant women and those with heart conditions ought to steer clear. What is flaming? According to TJ "Spark" Miller Jr., author of the site "The Comprehensive Guide to Flaming" (**www.users.nwark.com/~tjmiller/index.html**), it's "the act of writing insulting or derisive script with the intention of directing such script toward another Internet user or group of users."

In other words, a flame is a nasty Usenet newsgroup posting. From such posts, enormous Net conflagrations have ignited—

illustration by Rich Borge

some of these fiery debates and arguments have raged on for years, and continue still. The group alt.flame was specifically created as a forum for such oxygenated, ego-burning trash talk. Here, hundreds of Net users bash on one another daily and perpetually hammer away at each other's self-esteem in a no-holds-barred cage match manner. There's no decorum at alt.flame, or any of the other flame-designated war zones. While there are rather loose rules determining what's appropriate behavior and what exceeds normal boundaries in flaming, these newsgroups do invite kicking, screaming and biting. So bring your brass knuckles.

Spark's Web site is a great starting point for anyone who wants to brave the world of flaming. His guide offers users information about elite flame newsgroups, newbie faux pas, flamer nurseries (newsgroups where newcomers can practice their flaming techniques before entering such crazed groups as

"As soon as the herd cuts one of them out...they get torn apart in the bear pit."

alt.nuke.the.USA), weekly changes in flaming trends, news on major flame wars and the posting of a "Fuckhead of the Month" (FOM). What atrocity does one have to perform to win such an award? It's given to an individual who abuses the system in an immoral fashion or is "spanked" so badly that it deserves special attention.

Spark, an Iowa-born mainframe/PC/LAN systems technician is no stranger to combat. At 17, he joined the U.S. Airforce at Tonopah Test Range, Nev., and served with the 37th TFW (Provisional) during Operation Desert Storm. He spends five to 10 hours a week practicing the art of flaming and maintaining his Web site, which has been up since January '97. Spark says he, his wife and his family have been called every dirty name in the grand book of insults—he reports that the only member of his household who hasn't been attacked in a flame war is his dog. Despite the abuse, Spark loves to dish it out, and is quite good at it, too. After giving us a few pointers about the unusual hobby, he even honored *IU* with a painful tongue-lashing.

What prompted you to create a site about flaming?
Basically, when I started flaming, I was goofing off about it, and doing the wrong things. A young lady took me aside, and set me straight, and helped me get along so that I didn't piss everyone off in the flame groups. And I realized, as time went on, that newbies coming into these groups after me were doing the same thing, stumbling about and making fools of themselves. I wanted to set up a site where a newbie could come in and learn the ways of flaming before they ended up in a war gone bad.

How do you know when a flame war has gone bad? When someone's losing?
You can tell that someone is on the losing side when they run out of ideas. They start repeating themselves. They use side tactics, like putting a misc.test in the follow-ups.

What exactly would that do?
If you put a test group in your follow-ups, whoever answers your article will get a little message in their e-mail from every server that that article hit. It's just annoying more than anything else. You'll find people who start reaching lower and lower on the "moral scale."

What do you consider low?
Well, for example, this past week—I won't mention any names—there was this guy who was pretty much on everyone's bad side and was on the losing end of it, so he went to Deja News (**www.dejanews.com**), the Usenet post archiving service, and dragged up a real sick pedophile story. It involved one of the posters and her real-life family, her kid, her husband. You could tell that he was losing because he had to reach that low. You don't go after somebody's children, you don't go after somebody's race. But it happens, and the best you can do is flame them back. It's really more about honor than there being strict rules.

But isn't anything previously posted on the Net game? Are there really any rules in a flame war?
As far as things not to do, it depends on the group. Some of them will let you do anything, like forging somebody else's articles.

What group would let you do that?
Alt.evil would be a group for that tactic. I don't know of a newsgroup that will let you flood them, but they'll let you post edit them—where you basically type something, but make it look like it's coming from somebody else.

On your site, you talk at length about lame flames. What constitutes a lame flame?
Posts that 10,000 people have done before, like "You suck," or "You're an asshole."

What happens to lamers in the flame newsgroups?
They usually get ignored at first, if they're lucky. But if somebody is persistent, then everyone will start prying into that person's previous Deja News postings, and basically find out everything they can about this person and fling it right back at him or her.

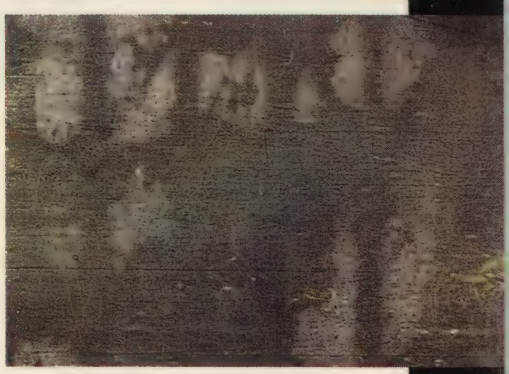
In these groups, at times, you see people requesting assistance. That seems like a pretty lame tactic.
DYOFDW. Do your own fucking dirty work. Some folks will come into a flame group or e-mail me asking for help. I just do this as a hobby. I'm not here to be a superhero or to save innocent Net users.

Are there those who do join forces to gang up on others?
There was a group in alt.evil—they used to be known as HFW, Hell's Flame Wars or some such tripe. What the leader of this group had done was he had gotten a group of people together in alt.evil. Their sole purpose in life was to attack other groups, flame the crap out of them, yell victory and then bolt—basically waste the newsgroup and get out. The weak link in HFW's chain though, was they had to maintain loyalty at all times. For example, about two months ago, a poster by the name Joltin' Joe faked his own death. He had his wife type out this long drawn-out story about how he died of some aneurysm. Everyone believed it. I started raising questions because the *Kansas City Star*, the paper for the guy's hometown, didn't have his obituary.

Jeez, you guys go to great lengths to research someone's past.
You have to because people pull pranks all the time. So making a background check is a good idea. At any rate, he faked his death. I even got fooled by it. I'll admit that. But meanwhile, this guy Roger Wiseman from HFW decided he was going to flame the hell out of him and post things like, "I hope worms eat ya." Everyone else was thinking, "Man, the guy's dead. Give him a break." The rest of HFW said, "Hey, that's not honorable." Wiseman told his own group, HFW, to go piss up a rope and so they threw him out. After they threw him out, he was reduced to nothing. We all dogpiled him. It's Darwinism at work, I guess. As soon as the herd cuts one of them out…they get torn apart in the bear pit. When somebody's weak or wounded, everyone else swarms him.

Does this guy still post?
Well, he stopped posting altogether for a while. But he does comes back from time to time. But comparing his style now and then, you can see that he has taken on a much darker tone. He has actually thrown out quite anti-Semitic and racist posts. For example, one of the subject lines in alt.flame right now is "Rosenfield, there is always room for one more Dachau." That's how crazy it can get.

Do you think these flame wars cause people to just lose it?
I've actually tried to cover that a little bit on my site. Personally, I think, "Hey, if you can't take it, get out and stay out." This is not for the mentally unstable. If you have anything wrong with you, like you have low self-esteem or you're borderline suicidal, DON'T COME IN HERE! People will actually suggest that you take a shot-



gun to your head. Anybody that has been in here long enough doesn't mean half of what they say. But some people come in thinking they're big and bad—but their pride won't let them get out. It's sad, but there's nothing that anyone can do about it.

When you flame people, do you use their real name in flames, or do you use their aliases?
We use a simple finger client, and that'll pick up their name. It's not as effective anymore, but we also use **www.four11.com** to get their names. And when you post their name, a lot of times, it shakes them real badly, like this one kid who got spanked off the Net a couple of months ago.

Spanked off the Net?
Being spanked off means that you leave due to extreme humiliation. Seriously. You insult somebody so badly that they just stop posting. That's considered a spank. So this one kid left under extreme humiliation. He came back with a new ISP and a new alias. For three weeks he had all

of us really fooled, posting as if he were a newbie. He really went to great lengths. But then some of us picked up on the fact that he knew exactly who everyone was in the group. He would have had to have lurked for three months straight to be able to know as much as he knew when he started posting. All I did was pull a simple finger client on him, and boom, there was his name.

So what happened to him?
What happened next was we ripped him to bits.

So do people go into these flame groups to argue real points, or is it just a place where people flame for the sake of flaming?
A lot of times, it's just to blow off steam. You come home from a hard day's work, find somebody you don't like and take it out on them. Others were picked on as a kid, I guess, and figured they would get back at the world because no one can kick your ass on the Net. And others just do it for the hell of it, to see how creative they can be.

So why did you start flaming?
I lost a bet. I used to post in the political newsgroups a lot. I bet something about the electoral votes. I said that Clinton wouldn't get 325 of them. I made a bet with someone and I lost. As part of the bet, I had to exile myself from the newsgroup for a month. So I wandered around elsewhere, and eventually I caught onto flaming. At first it shocked the hell out of me. I was in talk.abortion and rec.org.mensa of all places. And then I got caught in flame wars with two people simultaneously and it just went downhill from there.

So did you start off as a lamer when you began your career in flaming?
Well, you learn as you go. When I first got into alt.flame, I was a rag newbie. I didn't know anything. Back then, if somebody didn't take you under their wing, you either sank or swam.

What's the most dangerous thing a newbie can do when joining one of these newsgroups?
The most dangerous thing—telling the truth. When it comes to your real life, that information is just more ammunition for others. The second worst thing you can do is apologize for anything. You'll have your nose rubbed in it from here to eternity.

What are the most dangerous newsgroups to go into if you're just getting started? What would be like a flame minefield?
That would be alt.nuke.the.USA. They don't use any low tactics. They go more for the intelligent side of things. They will use as much creativity as they can to turn you into meat. They will shred you. And they do that as part of their initiation. You can post regularly if you want, but you won't be able to do it without getting insults from everybody. That newsgroup is basically an international pissing contest, the U.S. versus everybody else. They'll get together, though, the U.S. and whoever, and flame you until you pass muster. Then you have to stand up and flame everyone else in return. Once you've done that enough to everyone's satisfaction, the appropriate side will contact you and ask you to join them. But you have to be worthy.

What makes one worthy?
Creativity. There are only so many ways you can say "You suck." It's the difference between saying, "I wish you were dead," and "I wish you would take a shotgun and stick it in your throat and pull the trigger with your toe." It's a matter of how descriptive you are.

Do people congratulate you when you spank someone effectively?
People won't do it openly, but people will e-mail you a ton if your post was really good. There are people who have been lurking in alt.flame forever and will not post to save their life, but will let you know if you've done good, bad or otherwise.

So where should a newcomer go to practice the art of flaming?
That's where the actual flamer nurseries come into play. My site has a whole list of them. A lot of these are places where I started out. There's a lot of debate at these groups, and if you screw up, it's not going to ruin your reputation. The rest of the group will not jump you for messing up.

What's a good tactic to get someone's attention, to get others riled up so that you can ignite a flame war?
It takes a little bit of research and lurking. And it really depends on who you're going after. If you're going after somebody that's unpopular, they'll immediately latch onto you. The best way to get attention is to drag somebody into the flame group with you and then post like mad between yourselves. Eventually, someone will say, "Man, what kind of

idiot are you?" Personally, I like to go out and find other groups that have a lot of flame in them and sort of just jump into them and see who I can drag back into alt.flame with me.

What groups are you spending your time in right now?
Right now, I'm goofing off in rec.music.beatles of all places. It's a very high-traffic group. Millions of people in there. This is where Roger Wiseman ran off to. Lately, he's been posting in alt.flame. I went to Deja News to find out where else he's been posting to and went there. I love Deja News. It's man's best friend out here. What Wiseman was doing was, he would post something, but he wouldn't respond to any of the responses I'd make to him. So I said to myself, "All right, I'll hunt you down." It's a lot like hunting in real life, but you don't have to get the carcass when you're done. As long as you're not cross-posting and you're not posting to a moderated group, it's perfectly legal.

Does this upset people in those other newsgroups who aren't interested in flaming?
Oh yeah, everyone else in a group like rec.music.beatles will go, "Who the hell are you?" But I'll only post flames there in extreme cases. For example, Wiseman, that guy who posted that Nazi reference telling a Jewish poster to go to Dachau—I saved his post. Later, he had the temerity to try and call me a Nazi for some reason. So I took his article and my article and spliced them together to make a comparison. And then I just shoved the whole thing to rec.music.beatles.

Ouch. I'd hate to see what a veteran flamer like yourself could do to our magazine. Actually, why don't you prove your prowess and flame *Internet Underground*?
Sure. (Check out our Web site, **www.underground-online.com**, to see the painful flame spanking in its entirety, and to contribute your own.)

Flame Speak

alt.flame (n.)—The burning newsgroup hellfire where all flames eventually wind up.

Bear Pit (n.)—The dangerous, flesh-shredding chaos that a flamer falls into after posting a lame article. Generally, amateur flamers find themselves the meal of more experienced flamers.

Flame 1)(v.)—The act of writing insulting or derisive script with the intention of directing such script toward another Internet user or group of users. 2)(n.)—An article or IRC line containing insult or abusive verbiage directed at either a person or group of persons.

Flamer Nurseries (n.)—Places where one can learn to flame without receiving third-degree burns. Flamers in these groups tend to be quite weak, and can be spanked with relative ease.

Flood (v.)—Flooding is the practice of finding your opponent's favorite non-flame group and flooding it with binaries (any type), reposted messages and/or large ASCII files. This action fills a typical server's mass-storage capacity quickly, sending articles written by everyone else into the ether, and choking up the target group with useless information.

IKWYABWAI (n.)—A response that means or is synonymous with "I Know What You Are But What Am I?" The ultimate lame retort; shows a lack of imagination and desperation.

Lame 1)(v.)—A rather weak version of flaming; usually done to the author's detriment. 2)(n.)—A very common, unimaginative, screwed-up retort to a good flame.

Netcop (v.)—The act of reporting abusive behavior to the ISP of a poster in question. A tactic that's often abused, where a spanked flamer edits a post and e-mails it to an individual's ISP in hopes of getting someone booted off the Net by their provider.

Post Editing (v.)—The practice of altering the quoted text of your opponent to make him or her look ignorant, deviant or just plain ugly. Most newbies hit the roof the first time they see their text altered as such.

.sig flame (n.)—Your opponent's .sig, altered, degraded and added to your post as your own .sig file. Be sure that the e-mail you send to Grandma doesn't carry your opponent's rudely altered .sig. Considered a lame tactic by many, but effective in raising the blood pressure of your adversaries.

X-post (v.)—Method of cross-posting an adversary's racist, bigoted or highly offensive remark to easily offended newsgroups; users of this posting often follow the article with a message decrying the opponent's homophobia, intolerance, sexism. Considered lame, and sometimes illegal.

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Joey Lawrence, Hootie, MTV and even Drew Barrymore Have Their Vocal Detractors on the Internet

THE WEB'S MOST hated

George Orwell thought he was warning us. In *1984*, the citizens of Oceania are compelled by their all-controlling government to gather around their TV sets every day for a healthy dose of hate. The sinister social engineers of Orwell's overdiscussed and underread novel realize that to hate is human. Why not turn it to the advantage of the all-powerful State?

by Jon Vankin

Orwell never foresaw the Web, where there's currently little government supervision, but there's a whole lot of hate. In *1984*, everyone's hate is carefully focused on an imaginary uber-villain, "Goldstein." On the Web, it's—*David Hasselhoff*?

Actually, Hasselhoff, the bare-chested mastermind of both *Baywatch* and *Baywatch Nights* (a badge of cultural merit if ever there was one), is just one in a legion of online hate objects. Left to their own bilious devices, spare-time Webmasters worldwide have created what, taken as a whole, amounts to a scathing critique of mass culture. Virtually no piece of the mass-media landscape is spared a shot of digital hatred.

illustration by Hungry Dog Studio

But why would any right-thinking, healthy human devote significant energy to erecting a monument of malice? The reasons vary from the high-minded to the visceral. For example, Brazilian student Bernardo Carvalho put up his anti-Marilyn Monroe site (**www.africanet.com.br/~nailbomb/mm/**) after having a long discussion about gender issues in Hollywood with a psychology professor. (Carvalho apparently abandoned the intellectual approach when he got around to posting the site, which he titled, "We Hate Your Fucking Guts, Marilyn.")

On the other hand, 16-year-old Kiersten (who doesn't like to give away her last name—*for obvious reasons*), just had a primal urge to create a site devoted to hating Joey Lawrence. This impulse came about after she watched an episode of the old NBC sitcom *Blossom* and found that she "would burst into violent convulsions at the sight of Joey." Appropriately, her site (**home.earthlink.net/~abbachild/lawrence.html**) is entitled "The Joey Lawrence Makes Me Physically Ill Page."

Kiersten's bastion of teen-idol antipathy opens with a diatribe against Joey's *Tiger Beat*-ish appearance: "His head is HUGE. It's a virtual planetoid! It has its own weather system!" She then goes on to attack Joey's personality, which she likens to "a piece of toast." The site opens with a profound epigraph, which reads, in full, "Joey can whoa my schlong." (Hmmm. Must be some kind of hip *youth lingo*.)

The haters' motivations, then, are as diverse as their targets. Said targets range from such predictable villains as Bill Gates (**www.enemy.org/index9.html**) and his Microsoft Corporation (there are anti-Apple sites, too—see **www.cyberport.com/~carl/ hatemac.htm**) to such seemingly innocuous (albeit admittedly annoying) personalities as Bob Saget (**www.intercom.net/user/webster/bobhate2.html**), Hootie (of Blowfish fame) (**www.onyxtech.com/fstreet/hootie.htm**) and the aforementioned Mr. Hasselhoff.

A good point to start a tour of Internet ill-will is with the *Baywatch* Beefcake Boy. On the "David Hasselhoff is the AntiChrist" page (**www.indirect.com/www/warren/baywatch.html**), Webmaster Warren Apel catches Hasselhoff uttering such compromising (and *actual*) quotes as "I'm good-looking, and I make a lot of money." And, "There are many dying children out there whose last wish is to meet me."

He also finds that an anagram of Hasselhoff's name reads, "fad of devil's hash." You see, *Baywatch* is the fad, hence Hasselhoff is the devil—and "hash is what makes *Knight Rider* popular in Amsterdam." Talk about a smoking gun.

If Apel's page doesn't satiate your Hasselhoff hatred, there's also Philip Barger's recently inaugurated "I Hate David Hasselhoff Club" at **www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/3826/**.

Moving inland from the beach, a 17-year-old girl in the Los Angeles area calling herself "D. Mentia" (not her real name, believe it or not) has found a novel way to work out her feelings of distaste toward Drew Barrymore. She beats the crap out of her, virtually.

THE HATERS' MOTIVATIONS Are As Diverse AS THEIR TARGETS

The young Ms. Mentia spent seven hours one Saturday night ("I was bored out of my mind") creating a series of images portraying Drew in escalating states of physical distress. Click through the series and it appears as if you're knocking out Drew's teeth, blackening her eyes, bloodying her forehead, and otherwise engaging in violent activities.

"About a year ago I saw a 'Beat Up Rush Limbaugh' site and thought it was pretty funny," D. Mentia says. "The idea for the substance of the page stems from my own loathing of the Drew image—ditzy, blonde, 'Oh, I'm just a girl'-type mindset. You know the type."

We do, indeed.

But D. Mentia is quick to point out that she bears no malice toward Drew, even though on the site she subjects the young starlet to a sound (if virtual) thrashing. "More than her, I hate her clones. At the high school I'm at, there are 3,000 students. There are 500-plus Drew clones." A thought that is either alarming or enticing, depending on your personal predilections.

Web hate, however, is not reserved for cheeseball celebrities. Companies, products, services, even New Age books come in for vilification. For example, check out Kenneth Moyle's "Why I Hate *The Celestine Prophecy*" page, which reads: "As I trudged my way through the arid, jargon-mined desert that is Redfield's novel, bearing barrage upon barrage of jarring, brutally prosaic, '80s self-help clichés, wincing at the glare of the shiny, shifting, New Age platitudes, I couldn't help but ask myself time and again: What in God's name do people see in this banal, grating screed?"

"My biggest problem with *The Celestine Prophecy* wasn't with the New-Ageiness... there are thousands of New-Agey books that I blissfully ignore. My problem is that it's a truly crappy piece of fictional writing perched atop the bestsellers list," explains Moyle, a computer consultant at a Canadian University. Teleport your aura to **www.science.mcmaster.ca/csc/moylek/cp/** if you're of like mind.

The cable channel-*cum*-cultural phenomenon known as MTV has generated not just one simple hate site, but an entire "Web ring" of hate. Once you've exhausted your hate at, say **www.wco.com/~keebler/mtv/**, one click on an icon takes you to another anti-MTV site where you can start hating all over again.

There's no loathing site yet for the Nashville Network, but country music as an entire genre takes its lumps daily on the Web. While the Drew Barrymore hate page seems to be more about dislike for the "cloning" of an object of obsession, the Jake Van Order's "Yee-Haw: The Official 'I Hate Country Music' Page,"(**members.tripod.com/~Kalamazoo/index.html**) seems to have deeper psychological roots. This hate page functions as a means of expressing alienation from one's peers.

"I go to a school where there are hicks aplenty and they all fight about which truck is better, etc.," Van Order says. "They drive around with their trucks and country (music)—I just got sick of it."

While most major brands of computers and electronics elicit feelings of hatred (which is perhaps predictable given the crankiness of computer enthusiasts), non-technology brand names such as McDonald's (**members.aol.com/AnneDroidz/mcdsux.html**), Chevrolet (**www.peoples.net/~wingers/index.html**) and—of all things—Snapple (**www.fas.harvard.edu/~ziniti/ snapple. html**) draw similar vituperation. The supply of online hatred is seemingly infinite. Can't these people think of something more *productive* to do with their time?

"I make such constructive use of 70 percent of my time," says Marilyn-hater Carvalho, "why can't I spare some of the 30 percent left for destructive purposes, such as surfing with the remote control, drinking booze, smoking and making hate sites?"

Well put. Joey Lawrence despiser Kiersten offers similar sentiment, but more succinctly: "Fuck off!" she demurs. "Don't tell me what to do! Can't you do something more constructive than telling me to do something more constructive?"

And that brings up what may be the ultimate motivation behind hate sites—and it's the same motivation as most other sites. People want to communicate with other people. The irony is, if you run a hate site, people whom you touch with your ire tend not to like you. But that's part of the good, clean, adversarial fun. With that said, a hearty e-mail page is an essential component of the well-crafted hate site, because the e-mail page will inevitably be filled with—what else?—hate mail!

"The purpose of that page is to show how stupid people can be," says D. Mentia. "If I ever get dumb mail from a Drew-hater, I'll be quick to post that, too."

"I do not enjoy getting hate mail," she adds. "I do, however, *completely* love getting *dumb* mail from *stupid* people."

Her e-mail page reveals an ample helping of just that. A quick reading reveals that D. Mentia's correspondents characterize her as "an overweight, thick glasses-wearing, no-friend-having computer nerd who despises anyone who embraces life"; "one worthless piece of crap who shouldn't even be allowed the pleasure to look at Drew Barrymore"; "one sick freak"; "a sick, demented, stupid, jealous bitch"; "a jealous bitch" (again); and "ugly, bitchy and fat."

In fact, most of her correspondents seem fixated on D. Mentia's alleged weight problem, no evidence of which is offered, either way, on her page. For all we know, D. Mentia's quite thin. Or perhaps she weighs 300 pounds. Who cares? Apparently—and this is some sort of comment on the mentality of offended Drew worshippers—the worst thing you can call a woman (or anyone) is "fat." It's even worse than "gay," another popular juvenile accusation.

Linda Highland operates the Beatlehater's Home Page at **www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palms/1014**. She observes that "Beatles fans seem to be especially homophobic, it seems. Many even assume I'm a gay man!"

E-mailed outbursts of utter disdain often emanate from unlikely quarters, Highland finds. "The first one made me nervous. I wasn't expecting any response at all. And I thought, 'Oh no! This psycho is going to stalk me!'" she recalls. "The psycho turned out to be a rather sweet 13-year-old girl."

What, then, can we learn from the preponderance of hate on the Web? Is this a reflection of a growing distemper, an ominous surge of negativity and rudeness?

Probably not. Instead, it looks more like a healthy dissatisfaction with the banalities of mass-produced culture. Orwell's Big Brother bad guys channeled hate into a unifying force for their lemming-like subjects. On the Web, however, the situation is exactly the opposite. Online hate, really just a form of homespun satire, is the enemy of everything that TV, Hollywood and Madison Avenue, our real-life Big Brothers, try to ram down our throats.

More important, hate sites are yet another way the Internet allows us to contact other people we may otherwise never have the chance to meet—albeit in a somewhat strange way.

So go ahead, reach out and hate someone.

WHEN HE'S NOT SPARRING WITH PAT BUCHANAN ON CNN'S *CROSSFIRE*, JON VANKIN IS A BOSTON-BASED FREELANCE WRITER, AND IS THE CO-AUTHOR OF *THE 60 GREATEST CONSPIRACIES OF ALL TIME* (**WWW.CONSPIRE.COM**). HE'S CURRENTLY WORKING ON *THE BIG BOOK OF SCANDALS*, DUE OUT IN SEPTEMBER.

If you were inspired by this story, but are afraid that all of the good objects of hate have been used up, the *IU* staff, as a public service, has compiled this list of contemptible subjects who have yet to be scorned on the Web:

Gerard Depardieu, Beanie Babies, The Puttermans, Tom DeMay, Bette Midler, Snuffleupagus, *The Single Guy*, Tony Danza, Martha Stewart, chicken and Zachary Taylor.

Culture of Personality

by Gloria Mitchell

Only YOU Have the Power to Improve Online Chat

by David Spark

"Oh man, another cool chat program!—Voice, video, avatars, 3-D, VRML, home-cooked meals and games!" So why is it still so dull? Because even the most technologically advanced chat program is still dependent on its users to supply content.

That means only **YOU** have the power to improve the quality of online chat. You must be proactive. Contrary to popular advice, when trying to get noticed online, don't be yourself. Online chat is the Internet's costume party. And like any Halloween party, nobody wants to talk to the party pooper who refuses to come in costume.

The following is a primer on the different personae one can assume online. Study and rehearse the techniques most suitable to your character. When employed, you'll see a significant improvement in your online conversations. I guarantee it.

NOTE: Our main chatter's name is Davo All conversations took place on either IRC or in AOL chat rooms.

The latest word on the Internet is that it needs to change because people want their entertainment passive. Beyond the exertion of clicking a couple of buttons, people can't be bothered to figure out what they themselves want to watch or read or think about. People want to have their ideas prefabricated and spoon-fed to them. People want the Net to be more like TV.

Yeah, right. Stupid people, maybe.

Is it really possible that the promise of interactivity and instant communication has been only so much hype? That we all want lives of passive absorption, with no chance to turn around and say what *we* think?

No, it isn't. The constant proliferation of personal home pages, the strenuous efforts to make Usenet a forum for ideas and not just ads, the fact that "chat" is reported to be the Net's number-two most popular search term (yes, number one is what you think it is)—all these point to a deep, maybe even desperate need to *be* the medium rather than just absorb it. Like anyone who's ever kept an autobiographical novel-in-progress in their desk drawer, we want to tell the world who we are. We know that under the surface, we're wise and witty and sensitive and perceptive, and we're secretly smitten with the desire to show it all off.

And on the Net, we can do it with total impunity. We don't need an OK from an editor before posting our *magnum opus* on rec.arts.poetry—and if we choose anonymity, we don't need to worry about how Mom will feel if we title it "The Betrayals of My Childhood." As Fran Lebowitz once pointed out, the opposite of talking isn't listening. The opposite of talking is waiting to talk. For everyone who's spent a lifetime listening, reading and absorbing what other people say, the Internet may well be what they've been waiting for.

Of course, it's not easy to know how to go about opening up yourself and your thoughts online, or how to garner some satisfactory response to them. Many a chat room newbie has been reduced, like Bart Simpson on a bad day, to hopping up and down and whining, "Somebody pay atTENtion to meee!" (With <font size=10> tags.)

But in fact, the Internet provides its own paradigms. Consider the home pages you've been to: There are those that list the author's résumé and favorite links, and there are those that blow up Twinkies or eat balls. It isn't hard to guess which get the most hits; where a simple statement of facts would be ignored, creativity, daring and just plain weirdness get attention.

I'd have to say that since my own first wide-eyed wanderings through Web chat rooms a year ago, things have changed a bit. The ratio of quirky, intriguing posts ("Begorrah, Cisco, if you've become a bleedin' environmentalist suddenly, did you ever look closely at what comes out the back of our horses?") to dull ones ("I like Rollerblading and Green Day. What are you into?") has dwindled. Scintillating wit, inventive invective and heartfelt outpourings are harder to find. Patience, in scoping worthwhile hangouts and in waiting for their regulars to warm to

Corporate sites aside, the Net is still a world-wide cocktail party. Here's how to strut your stuff, pick up babes or make a scene.

The Rumor Monger

Technique: As the Rumor Monger, your assignment is to spread bogus gossip. Use any IRC channels necessary. A combination of creativity and credible sources will soon transform your fellow doubting chatters into believers of online tabloid journalism.

Pros: Keep it up and one day you may see your scandal in print.

Cons: You may get sued.

Sample Dialogue:

> Do you know how many dogs they had to kill in the making of Star Wars?

*<**Paladyn**> Davo: 0*

> The early scenes on Luke's home planet with the jawas...The midgets were so highly paid that they had to use dogs as stand ins. The dogs couldn't handle the conditions, so a bunch of them died.

*<**han-**> davo thats a good story, but ive never heard of it, its certainly possible i guess*

> It's not a story han.

*<**Paladyn**> I'm working on a web page*

> Better add the part about the dogs.

*<**han-**> davo i run an RPG on irc*

> So I'm thinking han, that you throw in some part about the dogs.

<han-> davo, i dont think so

> I can work it in for you if you want.

*<|**TK-421**|> it has nothing to do with starwars*

> What you can do is take a standard story. Like something about the storm troopers. Import it into Word and do a quick find and replace. Substitute "dogs" for "Storm Troopers." What do you think?

*<**han-**> Thanks Davo, that's ok*

The Expert

Technique: Whatever the discussion, you're the expert. Important note: No matter how much evidence they have against you, never back down.

Pros: Everyone will think you're so smart.

your forays, is necessary. Lots of patience. Full-page Anna Nicole Smith JPEGs on a 14.4 modem kind of patience.

But you don't want to wait that long, so here at *IU*, we've put together a few shortcuts for you. In the following pages, you'll find a guide to interactivity that gives the lowdown on places to go, people to see and software to download. Once you understand the mechanics of it all, check out David Spark's selection of chat room personae (below) for ideas on how to get the conversational ball rolling—or, alternatively, how to drop it right on your fellow chat participants' heads.

INTERNET RELAY CHAT

How it works: Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was a popular service on the Net long before Netscape or AOL came along. If you haven't tried it yet, you should, if only to get a sense of the Internet's origins. It simply lets users type text to one another—either privately or in group chats called channels. With an IRC client (a kind of program), users connect to an IRC server, which in turn is connected to a network of other IRC servers. At first, all IRC servers were connected to one another, but now there are several distinct server networks: EFNet, IRCNet, DALnet and Undernet are a few of the big ones. The networks don't "talk" to each other, but as a user, you can choose from any one of them each time you chat. Your IRC client will typically give you a list of servers in each network; choosing the one geographically closest to you will usually minimize lag time. If you know your friend will be on DALnet at a certain time, just connect to a DALnet server at that time.

Once there, you simply need to know your friend's nickname; a nickname or "nick" is like a CB handle, in that it identifies a user to other users. Don't have any friends to talk to yet? No problem—part of the point of IRC is that it lets you meet new people. Typing **/list** will get you a list of active channels on your network (they all begin with the character #, as in #hottub, #Christian_Singles, #IRCAddicts, #Marilyn_Manson_Freaks). Type **/join** and the channel name to enter a channel and chat with other users there.

The widely publicized complaint about Horny Net Geeks comes into effect here: If it seems from your nick that you might be female, male users will start sending you private messages along the lines of "so, u into cybersex?" You have a few options: a) choose a nick like BigMackDaddy, to scare them off; b) just say no; c) ignore the messages; d) run with it. For all the disgust Horny Net Geeks generate in some circles, there *are* women who like them. If you, yourself, are an HNG, creativity is key to getting the kind of attention you want. Figure

For everyone who's spent a lifetime listening, reading and absorbing what other people say, the Internet may well be what they've been waiting for.

Cons: That is, everyone except *true* experts.
Sample Dialogue:
> Don't even bother filing your taxes.
*<**peesh**> Davo: Why not?*
> The IRS won't even come after you. They're so bogged down. If you don't owe that much you probably can get away with it for a year. Haven't you paid enough already peesh?

*<**LarryK**> quantum physics tells us we are not even here*
> Quantum physics has no idea we're even talking. The only reason anybody even speaks about them is because they came up with a concept that we're all not here and that seemed so radical that someone decided to give them a little radio play.
*<**LarryK**> Quantum physics' value goes beyond radio.*
> The only thing valuable that came from quantum physics is the Spiro Graph.

The Matchmaker

Technique: The Internet needs a cupid. Privately forward fabricated love notes to random chatters with the attached message, "I think [so-and-so] really likes you."
Pros: You may make a love connection.

Cons: You'll rarely know the sex or sexual orientation of any of your fellow chatters.
Sample Dialogue:
> Do you know Maconcpl?
*<**HipGirl**> no i do not know him. why?*
> It's just that he was talking about you before you even came in.
*<**HipGirl**> huh? what was he saying?*
> He was talking about how cool you are.

> Hey, it sounds as if Lonewolf is sweet on you...
*<**sweetjenn**> REALLY! why is that?*

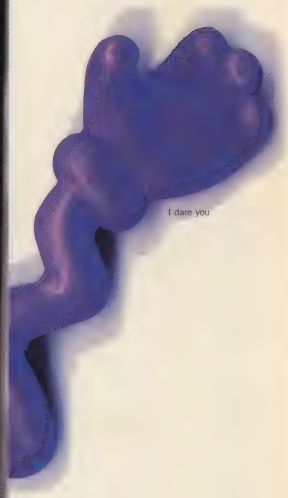
out who you're talking to and what she likes to talk about before asking whether she wants to get it on with you. Read some romance novels, or the latest Susie Bright story collection, if you're feeling clueless about how to make language sexy.

If, on the other hand, you like your chat clean, never fear—you'll find plenty of IRC users who feel the same way. The point of IRC is not to meet everyone or talk on every channel, but to befriend a few users who share your interests.

What you need: An IRC client and an Internet connection. (Well, duh.) The EFNet IRC Help Page (**www.irchelp.org/index.html**) has an excellent guide for new users that will take you through the process of downloading a client and getting started. Common shareware clients are mIRC for Windows (**www.mirc.co.uk**) and Ircle for Macintosh (**www.xs4all.nl/~ircle/**). With a graphical client like mIRC, you have a choice of typing in commands or using your mouse to execute them; it's a good idea to learn the basic text commands, since it's often faster to go through a few keystrokes and hit the return key than to play around with your mouse trying to figure out which icon is which.

Where to go: If you're new to IRC, you should join a channel specifically set up for new users, like #newbies or #irchelp. Here's where you'll find experienced IRC users with the patience to answer your questions. ("The only stupid question is the one you don't ask," one channel operator on EFNet offered.) With other channels, you take your chances: Some people are patient, but plenty will blow off newbies with an insult and an "rtfm" (for "read the fucking manual").

Once you've learned the ropes, you can join any channel that interests you. On our last look around, we found specific IRC channels set up for '80s music lovers, chess players, goths, guitarists, libertarians, ceramicists, soccer fans and paintball warriors, just for starters. Got other ideas? Just set up your own channel—IRC may be the biggest free-for-all exchange in human history.



WEB CHAT

How it works: If you can surf the Web, you can chat. In its most basic form, Web chat uses an ordi-

> Can't you tell???!!!
*<**sweetjenn**> not really :)....but love all the attention...:) but then what woman doesn't*

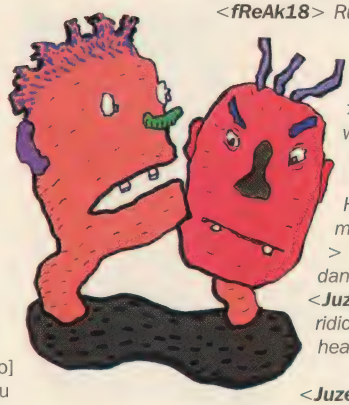
> Is there anything going on between you and timeflyer?
*<**Hiddenjoy**> no we are just friends*
> Really? Because I think he's got a thing for you.
*<**Hiddenjoy**> timeflyr is a female*
*<**RnC^ ^**> leave hidden alone*

> Hey, SweetJenn was talking about you.
> Is there anything going on between the two of you?
*<**lonewolf1**> not that I know, why?*
> Just seems like there's something going on...That's all.
> Oh, RnC doesn't like me too much.
> Goodbye.

*<**RnC^ ^**> Hey Davo, ya know these 2 things??? a /ignore and a ban?...u just had em applied*

The Instigator

Technique: Who wants to be a cupid when you can goad others to rage? Send incendiary private messages to fellow chatters. "[So-and-so] said this-and-that about you. Are you going to take that?"
Pros: Watch a friendly chat turn into a family feud.
Cons: Good luck trying to keep track of all of the rivalries you managed to provoke.



Sample Dialogue:
> Hey man, cool out, Rum is pissed.
*<**fReAk18**> yup i am me and I will not change for anybody*
*<**fReAk18**> Rum...and by the way..why did yah have Davo msg me*

> Yikes, I can't believe what Hawkshaw just said about you.
*<**Juzef**> What did Hawkshaw say about me?..I missed it.*
> "Juzef needs his mom to dance...probably a whore."
*<**Juzef**> That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard??*

*<**Juzef**> Hawkshaw: did you say something about me??*
*<**Juzef**> Cause someone said you did...*
**** Juzef was kicked by RumRaison (RumRaison)*

nary browser to post data to a site: You type in what you want to say, hit send and wait for the data to transfer to the site. You also have to reload the page each time you want to see what new stuff has been said by other people in the chat room. It can be an agonizingly slow process, but it has some advantages. With most Web chat, you can use HTML formatted text in your posts to incorporate pictures, colors and hyperlinks into what you have to say. The slowness of the exchange makes it less disorienting than IRC for newbies, and also gives users the chance to carry on conversations over a number of hours or days, if they like—a group of friends can come and go from a room, can leave posts for one another and can read back over previous posts, without everyone having to show up at exactly the same time. Chat participants who use rooms this way tend to get into longer, more thoughtful posts and exchanges—indeed, a few chat sites have spawned what amount to impromptu literary magazines or debate societies.

Not all Web chat rooms are so slow; some use Java or special browser plug-ins to keep the chat scrolling faster and to make it look more like IRC. Plug-ins like ichat (**www.ichat.com**) eliminate the need to constantly reload—your text appears on the screen as soon as you hit the return key. Cleverly, ichat also works with some IRC commands, for people who are used to that—though it seems unlikely that anyone would leave IRC just to use an imitation thereof.

Unlike IRC servers, which are usually run by volunteers on university-owned equipment, Web sites that offer chat have to be financed somehow or other. Most, like WebChat Broadcasting System (**webchat.wbs.net**), are supported by ad revenue from banners on the sites; some, like The WELL (**www.well.com**), collect fees from users instead. And commercial sites are starting to offer chat in order to attract surfers: Universal Studios, for example, has a chat subsite for discussing movies (**chat.universalstudios.com**). On a quick visit there, I didn't find anyone discussing movies, or indeed anything remotely interesting. (No one was even in the *Xena* room!)

What you need: A Web browser and, for some sites, a chat plug-in.

Where to go: Finding functional chat rooms on the Web can be a bit of a challenge; some long-running chat sites like L'Hotel Chat (**chat.magmacom.com/lhotel/hotel.html**) are so overloaded that only paying members can access them. One excellent, usually reliable chat site is State of Insanity (**soi.hyperchat.com**). State of Insanity is run for fun, not for profit—which means there's no ad banners, no editorial control and very little structure. It's like an egalitarian, anarchic version of The WELL. Anyone over 18 can enter and can chat in the public rooms or create one of their own; members who pay $5 per month can create up to six public or private rooms, with any title and topic they like. Members can also reserve up to six nicknames, can send messages to one another through the State, and can FTP files (from JPEGs to entire home pages) for storage in their own directories there. Plus, they get a real e-mail address (i.e., JoeSchmoe@hyperchat.com) for each nickname they've reserved. Anonymous membership is allowed, and fees all go back into the system to purchase

> What's up with freak /msging me with insults about you guys?
*<**KrKi**> whats she saying?*
**** fReAk18 was kicked by RumRaison (Stop talking about me behind my back.)*
*<**Teleute**> Davo. Tell us what she's saying.*
*<**Teleute**> I'd specifically like to know what freak18 has said about me.*

Ms. Misinformation or Mr. Bad Advice

Technique: An evil Ann Landers doppelgänger has entered the world of chat and is giving incredibly bad advice. Everybody's got an opinion. Just make sure that yours is wrong.
Pros: Some may actually act on your suggestions.
Cons: And some of them may make a fortune off what you initially perceived to just be a joke.

Sample Dialogue:
*<**Minimal**> I got rear-ended today. I'm going to call my insurance agency tomorrow.*
> Don't bother. You should strike a deal with the guy who hit you. Make him believe that you're really going to screw him over with your insurance agency.
> Strike a deal with him first, collect, and then file a claim.
*<**Minimal**> My brothers tell me to go to the emergency room tomorrow and say I have pains...*
> Good idea. Tell the guy that you have various expenses that need to be paid if you're to stay away from your insurance agency. Lawyer fees, therapist fees, podiatrist fees, tarot card readings, and all the alcohol you drank to numb the pain.

The Hall Monitor

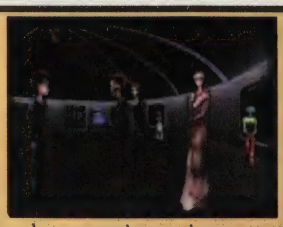
Technique: Now that AOL gives you the ability to report illicit chatters, why not spend some time online as tattletale? As a Hall Monitor, however, your perceptions of so-called "wrong behavior" should be different than that of other chatters.
Pros: People will really begin to resent you.
Cons: Chatters will go out of their way to antagonize you with increasingly violent speech.
Sample Dialogue:
***Cmajilla**: myibm: You just don't know me*
> cmajlia, I know it wasn't nice, but please be polite.
***Cannonballs**: i have no desires only evil thoughts*
> Cannon, well then your evil thoughts are not welcome here.
***Cannonballs**: did you date an 8 year old when you were 8*
> Please people, this talk of child dating is not appropriate.

bigger servers and better connections. Postings range from the mundane to the philosophical to the out-and-out raunchy; it may take a while to find people that suit your interests, but it's well worth the try.

AVATAR-BASED CHAT

How it works: Text chat is passé; the interactive age heralds whole virtual worlds of visual and aural stimulation. Or that's the theory behind avatar-based chat, where users have pictures (avatars) to represent themselves onscreen, and interact in rooms where the pixels form leather sofas, Oriental rugs and the like.

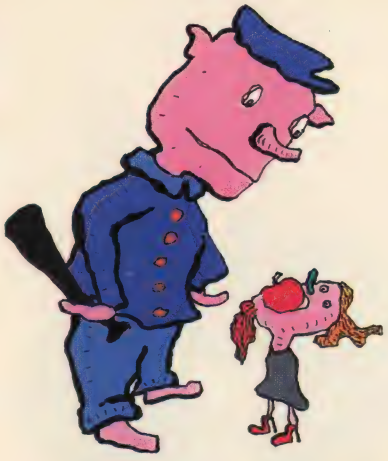
Though users still type to each other, the experience is more visual than verbal—in fact, it doesn't seem to matter much whether anyone has anything to say, what with backgrounds, animated avatars and goofy sight gags to keep users entertained. Anime chicks and underwear models abound, but some avatars are more fun: Bongo, the one-eared rabbit from Matt Groening's "Life in Hell" cartoon, careening around the screen in a mosh is a sight not to be missed.



In VRML chat realms, the rooms and avatars are enhanced by 3-D effects: Instead of seeing a room and its inhabitants laid out on screen as though they were on a map, users move from spot to spot, with objects and other users looking commensurately bigger or smaller. Same goes for ambient audio like birds and waterfalls—they get louder as you move toward them and softer as you move away. Developers like Worlds Inc. (**www.worlds.net**) have been busy creating applications for surreal-looking virtual environments like Worlds Chat and AlphaWorld. (Worlds Chat is available on CD-ROM; AlphaWorld is experimental freeware.) It isn't *Snow Crash* yet, but the idea's certainly there.

What you need: Software and, usually, a connection of 28.8Kbps or faster.

Where to go: The Palace (**www.thepalace.com**) is probably the most popular avatar-based chat program; in addition to selling software to users, The Palace licenses out server software to hundreds of businesses, schools and individuals. These licensed Palace servers generally have some theme or agenda, like Japonline: "Have a chat in Spanish on Japan's social issues. Hablamos sobre Japon en español."



> If you want to talk about eight year olds please leave.
***Dose Doors**: you are a big nutt*
> Dose Doors, now please...No call for that.
> My mouse is beginning to edge toward the notification button.
***Cannonballs**: i once dated an apple sucking bearded lady*
> Please, the language.
> I'm just shocked by the behavior in this room.
***Cannonballs**: davo is a prude*
***Cannonballs**: my worst date was with a prude named davo*
> Oh Cannon, I don't think that's nice.
> An apology would probably be in order.
***PUDDN79**: Davo are you the Aol police?*
> I'm not an AOL cop, just a concerned AOLer.

The Meat Lover

Technique: Your love of meat is so strong that you can't stop talking about it, even online. A good knowledge of the different cuts would be helpful before embarking on your carnivorous adventure. Contact your butcher first.
Pros: You may really piss off some strict vegetarians.
Cons: You may get salmonella poisoning.
Sample Dialogue:
***Dynamo9999**:*
AGE-SEX EVERYONE
> Anybody want to invite me over for dinner? I so badly want some meat.
***ELJAN**: What the hell?*
***Cyn2U**: well...I'm in the only room that usually makes any sense!!*
> Would love to eat a tender, extra lean Filet Mignon.
> Need an AGE-SEX-FAVORITE CUT OF MEAT check
***Samshakes**: 16/f/vegitarian*
***MacGart**: 16/f/steak*
***Kasper199**: 15/m/female is my favorite meat*
> A t-bone would be awesome.
> trimmed to perfection.

As a user, paying for the software means you can choose an avatar and pick a unique name—freeloaders are restricted to generic smiley faces and names like "Guest458."

The dozens of rooms on the main Palace server come equipped with some inventive features—in one room, anything users type is transformed by an Elmer-Fudd-style speech impediment ("What's going on hewe? Why am I wisping?"). The Palace seems most fun viewed as a game; as chat, it's hard to imagine serious discourse unfolding amidst the cartoony, cutesy icons.

For something a bit less slick, the clunky-looking AlphaWorld (**www.worlds.net/alphaworld/index.html**) is worth a try: You can alter the environment by building objects and structures, and can attach pop-up labels to them to distinguish your cones, blocks and blobs from everyone else's.

DIRECT CHAT

How it works: The term direct chat describes programs that allow you to connect specifically to another user or group of users, rather than going into rooms or onto channels. Programs like PowWow (**www.tribal.com**) and ICQ (**www. mirabilis.com**) work sort of like telephones: You start up the program and tell it to whom you want to connect. If that person is running the same program, they get a sound and screen notification telling them you want to talk. Both of you then get a split screen where each person's text appears in its own box as it's typed, so that each character pops up on the screen individually. (This can be amusing if you get a kick out of poking fun at other people's typing skills.) Once you're chatting, if someone pages either of you, and you accept, the screen will divide into three boxes, and so on. For most purposes, there's

not much difference between direct chat and setting up a private channel for you and your friends on IRC. Direct chat does have a few added elements, though: Not only can you chat and transfer files, you can also surf the Web *en masse*. And if you've got microphones and sound cards, you can send your voices back and forth. Some "Internet telephony" programs, like Internet Phone (**www.vocaltec.com**), mimic telephones even more closely: You can make direct calls and carry on real-time, two-way voice conversations. An advantage to Internet Phone is that it can be used across platforms: Mac and PC users can talk to one another. It costs money ($49.95) to get the licensed version, but when you consider that it can save dollars on long-distance calling, it's not a bad deal.

What you need: A direct chat software program.

Where to go: TribalVoice (**www.tribal.com**) is the download site for PowWow, a piece of PC software put out by a group of programmers in Colorado who like to write code, fast and go to sweat lodges. Over a million users have downloaded PowWow, which is free for individual use. It's also a lot of fun: One notable useless-but-cool feature is that you can open a whiteboard for you and your fellow users to draw on. TribalVoice maintains a White Pages database of users who want to be listed, so it's possible to chat with

> I've got beef jerky for those that just can't wait.
***ILUVELO**: here, here*
***MacGart**: Get off the food thing*
***Wyhylla333**: I said MY BREASTS ARE ENGORGED*
> Wyhylla, you know what would help? A nice piece of meat.

The Psychiatrist

Technique: Psychoanalyze fellow chatters whether they wan it or not. Feel free to make gross misdiagnoses.
Pros: People love it when you show interest in them.
Cons: Some consider it prying into their lives.
Sample Dialogue:
> We all could use a little spiritual guidance.
*<**pippi3**> there is no one here but me in Truth*
> And how do you know that you've found truth?
*<**pippi3**> because I have moments of Bliss and beyond*
> Couldn't these moments of bliss just be gas?
*<**pippi3**> unworthy of happiness perhaps*
> Sounds like you're not willing to enjoy your happiness, pipp.
*<**pippi3**> in Truth we are One*
> Kind of like congealed french fries.
> So am I more truthful than you because I'm closer to GOD.
*<**pippi3**> are u?*
> I think I'm closer to God because he invites me over for potluck dinners.

The Liar

Technique: Wherever people live or whatever they do, either you or one of your relatives have something in common with them.
Pros: People will be astonished with the

random users, or search the database for people with particular interests. But since the point of direct chat is to connect to a specific user, it will probably come in handiest for people who already have a chat partner in mind.

VIDEOCONFERENCING

How it works: Think of Mr. Spacely calling George Jetson—videoconferencing is like that, only slower. A digital camera captures and transmits a number of frames per second, depending on how fast your Internet connection is, and transmits them over the Net, along with audio. So instead of typing to faceless, anonymous nicks, you can see and hear your fellow users. (No more telling everyone you look just like Jennifer Aniston or Brad Pitt.) It's hard to tell whether the thrill of seeing someone sitting at the computer is worth the bandwidth (unless, of course, that someone is a stripper, in which case the thrill is worth the bandwidth plus $70 per half hour). But from a purely technophilic perspective, being able to see and talk to someone thousands of miles away is pretty damn cool.

What you need: Along with an Internet connection and videoconferencing software, you'll want a digital camera, microphone and sound card. You don't need ISDN or a T1 connection, but it helps.

Where to go: CU-SeeMe is available as freeware from Cornell University at **cu-seeme.cornell.edu**, and in a commercial version from White Pines at **www.cu-seeme.com**. In its simplest configuration, CU-SeeMe allows a point-to-point connection for one user to talk to (and see, of course!) another; for multiuser conferences, it uses a reflector program to allow up to eight windows at a time. Sort of like in IRC, you have to choose a particular server to connect to each time you want to talk; you'll need the IP address of a reflector site, of which there are dozens. The download sites make the program sound serious and purposeful (business applications! educational space shuttle simulations!), but in fact there are plenty of recreational users out there. To chat with them, you'll need to find some reflector sites; the CU-SeeMe Cool Site (**ucsu.colorado.edu/~hundley/coolsite.html**) is a good place to start. The CU-SeeMe Cool Site offers both some technical info and a discussion of CU-SeeMe as a culture with its own rules and jargon. (For example, a "wallflower" is someone who has "a camera with very good video but instead of showing themselves they show the keyboard or the wall"). If you want to find someone in particular and you aren't sure where or whether they're logged in, try PeopleNet's CU-SeeMe Reflector Scanner (**www.face2face.com/CU-SeeMe/test.html**), which reports which reflectors are active and who is connected to each. Pick an active reflector and hop on; just make sure your hair's combed, your shirt's on the right way and you don't have stuff stuck in your teeth.

amazing coincidences—"That is so wild."
Cons: There is an eventual breaking point on the number of coincidences one can have—"Ah, he's just being a jerk."
Sample Dialogue:
*<**Michayla**> hey, have I talked to you before?*
> I think we have.
*<**Michayla**> I am in College Station Texas at Texas A&M Univerisity*
> Oh, I have an aunt who teaches there.
*<**Michayla**> double degree in Journalism and speech communications and minor in spanish*
> My grandfather did a lot of business in Spain. Knew Juan Carlos.
*<**Michayla**> wow! Do you know who I can get any help or connections with?*
> Yeah, I know a lot of people.
*<**Michayla**> do you know who foxy brown is?*
> Oh, yeah. I know who she is. Her album was released in two different versions. A dirty and a clean version. My brother works on a FCC panel that forced her to produce the clean version.

The Arguer

Technique: No subject is too small or innocuous for you to take the other side. Your only purpose online is to disagree.
Pros: People will fight hard to stand by their beliefs.
Cons: Chances are pretty good that you'll get kicked off the channel.
Sample Dialogue:
*<**Teleute**> Davo. Please don't presume to tell us how to run our channel.*
> I just think your attitude could use a check up.
*<**Teleute**> Because you're an idiot.*
> Hey Teleute. you wanna take it outside.

> You know I've been in here for almost an hour and I haven't seen any mention of Immanuel Kant.
*<**Durtro**> davo: that's cause Kant is an overrated wanker.*
> Kant isn't here to defend himself. Lay off.

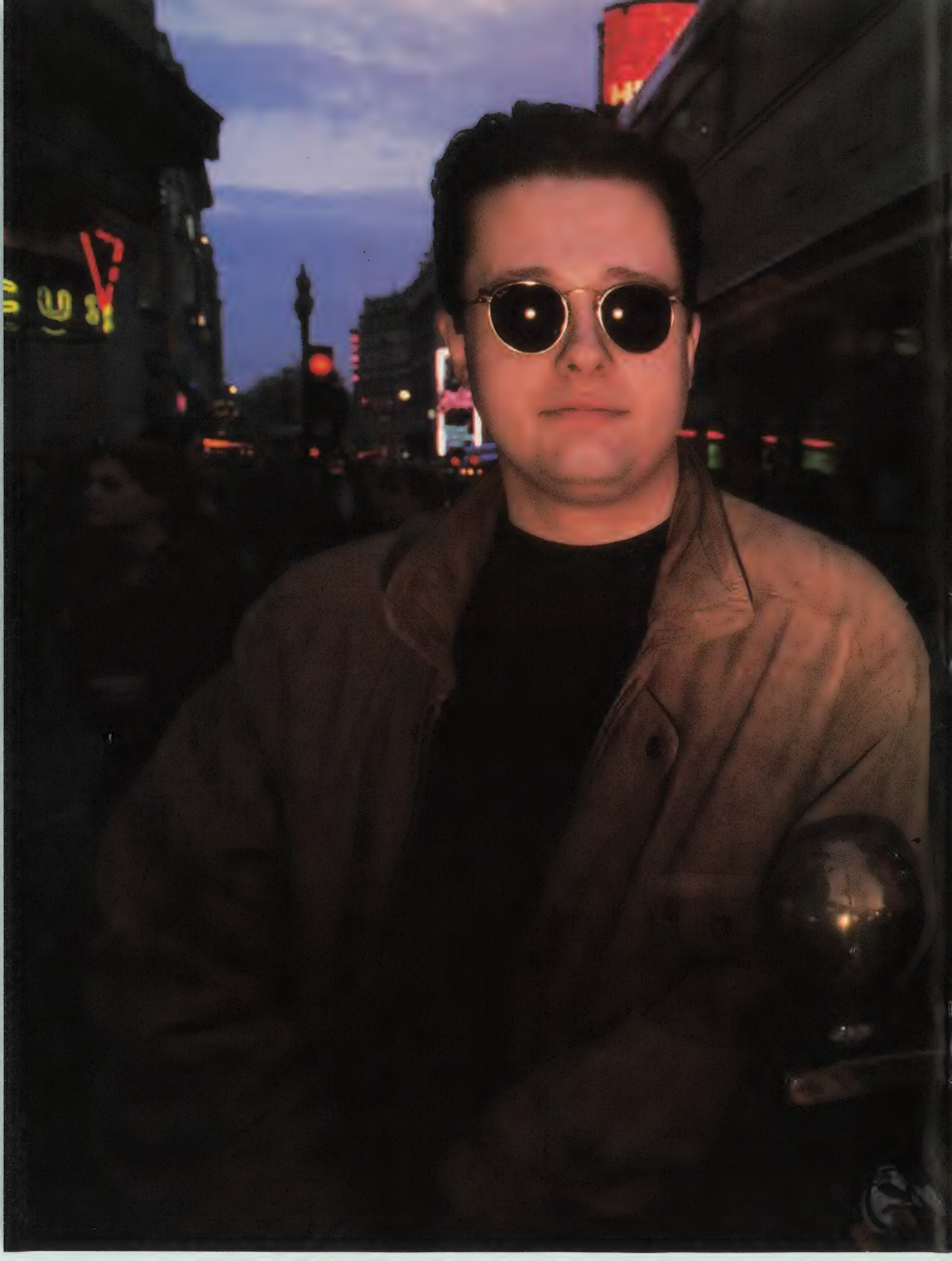


Photo by St. John Pope/Blackstar

The torture device was not on display when I visited the Tower of London, but a friend and native Briton offered this description of the brutal device: "It's a slender, polished metal pyramid, about six feet high, 18 inches wide at the base, and rises to a needle-sharp point. Enemies of the Crown were simply lowered gradually onto the point of the pyramid, which penetrated the rectum and passed right up through the body." Film and print media may favor the tea-sipping, cricket-playing stereotypes of a merry old England, but as my friend put it, "This country has a great tradition of law and order."

In Merry Old England, Hackers Are Considered Enemies of the Crown

the london UNDERGROUND

By Rob Bernstein

Simon Gardener, Underground Liaison and President of England's Hacker Convention, Access All Areas (AAA)

Thankfully, the monarchs no longer view the use of cruel and unusual devices as condign punishment for criminal offenses; if they did, I might have found myself bound in thumbscrews on my first day there. You see, when I arrived in London, I rendezvoused with five elite hackers from the London Underground at the corner of Buckingham and Victoria Square, just blocks away from the Royal Palace. We met to discuss an upcoming hacker conference in

the city. Apparently, we were breaking the law by just standing there. In England, according to the Criminal Justice Act, it's illegal for more than five people to meet in a public area. Law-and-order isn't as barbarous as it used to be in England, but it's surprisingly austere. Even though the hackers joked about the restrictive law, and how it's rarely enforced, they opted to move our discussion indoors. These hackers, like their American brethren, are a wee bit paranoid.

The chosen meeting place is Café Internet, a wired coffee shop boasting six Fujitsu icl Indiana terminals, and some amazing Mövenpick crème raspberry ice cream. The shop is not nearly as hip as its flaky neighbor, the Space Café—and these hackers are anything but flaky or hip. They're preps: clean-cut, well-dressed and without the in-your-face Trent Reznor attitude of their U.S. DefCon counterparts. But their poised demeanor belies a mischievousness and discontent that's revealed the minute they begin discussing national politics and their run-ins with governmental spooks.

"England is the land of Big Brother," bemoans Maelstrom, one of the hackers in attendance, who says that the United Kingdom leads the world in surveillance and video technology. James Bond's gadgetry is nothing compared to some of the devices these hackers insist are being employed by Scotland Yard, MI5 and MI6, the country's equivalents to the U.S.'s FBI and CIA. According to one unnamed hacker, Wembley Stadium, which is capable of seating upward of 80,000 screaming-mad sports fans, can be scanned by authorities in less than four minutes.

Pursuing the point further, Simon Gardener, the president of Access All Areas (AAA)—a yearly event that invites hackers and online enthusiasts from all over the world to discuss issues concerning computers, networks and electronic privacy and security—directs me to the coffee house doorway. From there, he points out the cameras that hang from nearly every street corner and office-front in sight, and relates an amusing tale about a thief who was caught on camera. Apparently, from a surveillance tape, it was "clear" that the thief was following an elderly woman in an effort to steal her handbag. In the end, the criminal chose not to steal the handbag; but the authorities "convinced" the man to plead guilty anyway, because the tape had clearly shown that he had the "intent to commit a crime."

After a communal smack to the forehead and a short fit of laughter, the hackers qualify their disgust at London authorities by pointing out the necessity of the surveillance technologies, which help identify the culprits of terrorist acts, like the IRA (two bombs apparently went off during my stay in the city) and Libyan nationalists; but the hackers also realize that such close surveillance means a watchful eye on growing incidents of criminal electronic activity. For those of you who thought U.S. laws regarding such unlawful behavior were harsh, behold Parliament's Computer Misuse Act of 1990 (visit **tachyon.mono.org/~arny/cmuse.html** for the precise definition of the law):

Section 1: Unauthorized access of a computer—punishable by up to six months in prison or a fine of £1,000.

Section 2: Unauthorized access to a computer with the intent to commit or facilitate the commission of a serious crime—punishable by up to five years in prison.

Section 3: Unauthorized modification and impairment of a computer, or its data—punishable by up to five years in prison.

The Computer Misuse Act, which may be revised to be harsher yet, was created in response to a 1986 hack on British Telecom Prestel, the country's first information network. Two Englishmen broke into the account and accessed all the customer identification numbers. The two men used the numbers to identify the Duke of Edinburgh's private mailbox, where they left a number of "private" messages. The hackers were caught, but the offense they were charged with, "making a false instrument" (part of London's Forgery Act), did not hold up in High Court. Thus was born the loathed Computer Misuse Act which, like many poorly constructed bills devised by computer illiterates on Capitol Hill, is vague in its definition of computer misuse.

And unfortunately, in England, there is no Constitution upon which to challenge the legality of a law. According to Charles Platt, a native of England living currently in New York City and the author of *Anarchy Online*, "It is customary for all members of Parliament to vote the party line on just about everything. This virtually guarantees that any new law introduced by the majority party in the House of Commons will be approved." The only example of checks and balances set into place to prevent

the passing of a law in England is an overriding vote by the House of Lords. But as Platt points out, this is rare, and usually only means that "a law is simply sent back to the House of Commons to be redrafted slightly." The Queen maintains veto power on any law, but exercise of such power never happens.

"So you have a situation where the government wields much more power than in the United States, and only the traditional British qualities of tolerance and compromise have prevented the country from turning into a police state," says Platt.

Dazzles, a Unix guru from Hounslow who works as an analyst programmer, speaks similarly about the state of legislative affairs in England, and voices concern about the Computer Misuse Act. He believes it's too vague, but says that the public is unaware of or uninterested in the potential abuse of the law. "We are led to trust the police and the government's interpretation of the law, and that they will only enforce areas that do not infringe our civil liberties."

Adds Maelstrom, "If ever there was a country of sheep following the herd and blindly accepting anything without a murmur, it's the U.K."

And so hackers in England, confronted with severe laws and penalties, are very careful not to overstep legal boundaries, usually.

On rare occasion, an unruly hacker will flaunt his powerful expertise. One recent instance that made big headlines in England was the hacking of the British Labour Party Web site (**www.labour.org.uk**). It was broken into twice, just months prior to the election. A group of trouble-makers calling themselves the Digital Anarchists (according to one news source) took credit for the act. The Web site graffiti artists changed the site headline "Road to the Manifesto" to "Road to Nowhere," and rerouted links that were pointing to information about Labour party members to pages posting details on Jim Henson's *Muppet Show*. Gardener says that authorities questioned him and his friends at a "hacker party" about the Labour site prank. He denies having anything to do with the incident, but recognizes that, due to his high profile as the founder of AAA, he remains one of the "usual suspects."

Gardener, who's very close-mouthed about the darker side of hacking in England, says that British computer and network specialists almost never show off their skill for fear of retribution by the authorities. The elite are discreet, he explains. Who are the British elite? Apparently, the underground in England is small, exclusive—no need to apply. Says Maelstrom, "The British scene is a pretty loose connection of people interested in hacking, of which about ten at the most have the slightest idea of what they're doing." That's a small line-up for Scotland Yard. The police, however, still have difficulty identifying hacking culprits. "They just stumble through investigations and attempt to convict people on evidence that they cannot prove. They get away with murder," says Dazzles.

According to Maelstrom, though, it's the hackers who've been getting away with murder of late (although that's subject to change soon). Apparently, the Computer Misuse Act has not been enforced with much gusto in England. This March, infamous English hacker Richard Pryce (alias: Datastream Cowboy), a 16-year-old music student, was only fined £1,915 by a London court for a number of hazardous hacks. Pryce, who was hunted by the Scotland Yard computer crime division for 13 months in 1994, breached U.S. Air Force and Lockheed defense computers using a sniffer program that captured passwords. Pryce, as Datastream, also managed free international phone calls via Bogota, Columbia, so that his parents would not discover his long-distance activities. Before discovering Datastream Cowboy's true identity, the Pentagon referred to him as the country's No. 1 threat to security, and believed him to be part of a major international spy ring. Nope, just one of England's hacker elite.

The London court was criticized by the media for showing too much leniency in the case, so hackers are on their guard, fully expecting that one of them will soon become "the example." Matthew Bevan, known as Kuji among the hacker elite, is also being brought to trial for allegedly aiding Datastream on his hacking quest. Kuji still maintains his innocence, but just may become that example.

Gardener, who was busy readying Access All Areas III (**www.access.org.uk/aaa/96/main.html**) during my visit to London, says he's experiencing the growing prejudice against hackers thanks to sensationalized media headlines. Conference facilities have been inhospitable to Gardener ever since he began the annual London hacker gathering in 1995. At the original AAA, King's College turned off air conditioning during a 90-degree heat wave, while British Telecom, the all-powerful phone company, nearly reneged on installing ISDN lines for conference attendees. AAA II lost its space at City University after local press reported on the event; and at press time, this year's AAA was in danger of being canceled due to continued resistance among conference facility administrators. What's a legit hacker to do?

"Access All Areas III will go ahead even if we all end up in Hyde Park and the speakers have to shout through a megaphone," insists Gardener. The elite are discrete, but not timid. Gardener views himself as a middleman between the hacking community and the computer industry, and is vocal about privacy and security rights issues. On the plate for AAA III—national encryption policies. England is planning on banning the use of the technology.

I commiserate and remind the hackers of America's current fight against censorship and the hated Communications Decency Act. As I'm about to ride my high horse, Maelstrom silences me with a curt laugh. "What?," I ask. Responds Maelstrom, delivering the punchline to our two hour long meeting, "We should have such luxuries as the CDA here."

"If ever there was a country of sheep following the herd and blindly accepting anything without a murmur, it's the U.K."

—British Hacker, Maelstrom

They might be,

they could be,

they are...

one of the

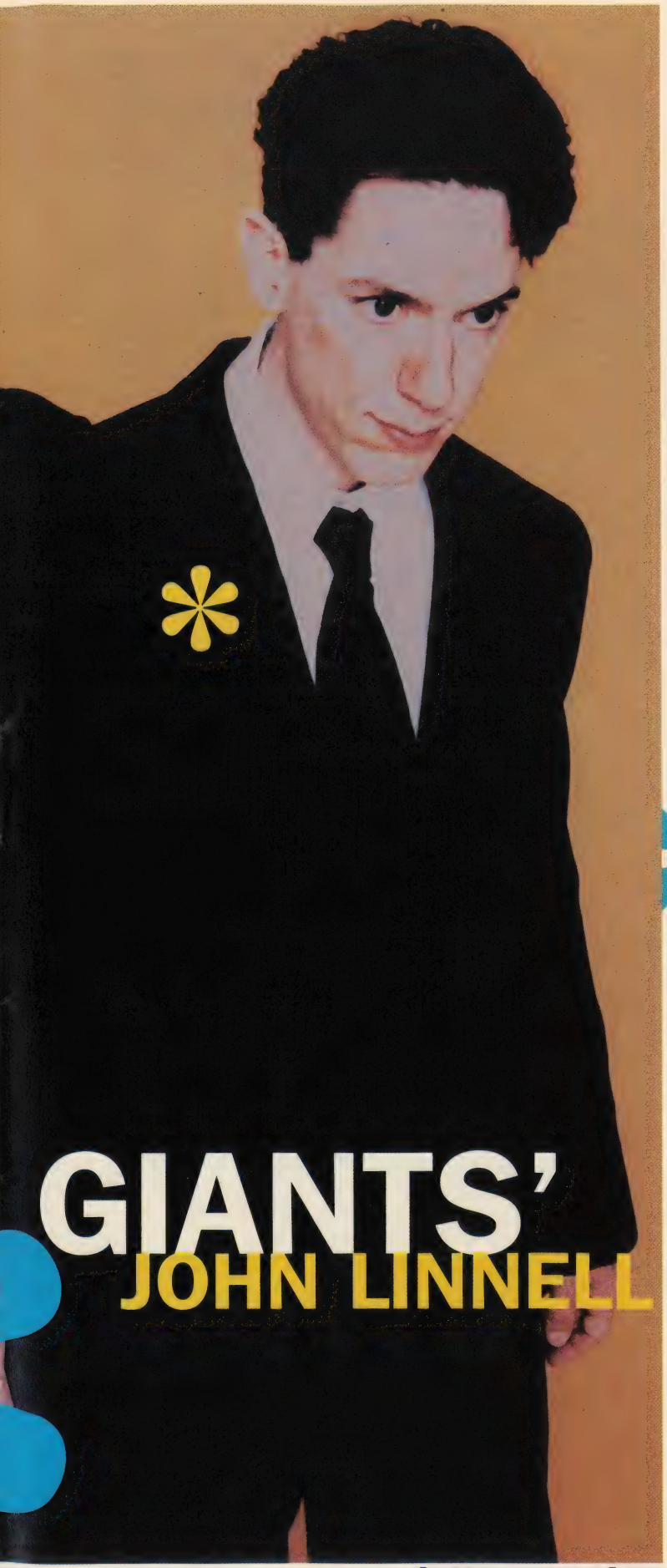
Internet's most

popular bands

ON THE NET WITH...

THEY MIGHT BE

BY STEVE KNOPPER



GIANTS' JOHN LINNELL

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ELEKTRA

HALFWAY THROUGH "PENCIL RAIN," A TYPICALLY GOOFY THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS SONG FROM 1988, QUIET TONES BEEP REGIMENTALLY UNDERNEATH THE ELECTRIC GUITAR AND DRUMS. THE SOUNDS ARE DIFFICULT TO NOTICE, LET ALONE DECIPHER, EVEN IF YOU'RE A DIE-HARD THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS FAN. BUT—SURPRISE!—A HALF-DOZEN PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET FIGURED OUT THAT THE BEEPS WERE IN FACT MORSE CODE. TRANSLATED, THE CODE, OF COURSE, IS A LINE FROM THE OLD SPANISH FOLK SONG "CIELITO LINDO." HOW COULD ANYONE HAVE MISSED THAT? TRIVIAL RECORDED MOMENTS LIKE THESE MAKE THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS, A 15-YEAR-OLD NEW YORK CITY ROCK 'N' ROLL DUO NAMED FOR A 1971 GEORGE C. SCOTT FILM, THE PERFECT BAND FOR NETHEADS. IT'S ALMOST AS FUN DEBATING THE PALINDROME IN "I PALINDROME I" ONLINE AS IT IS REMEMBERING WHICH *SIMPSONS* EPISODE HAD THE HUMAN FLY CLIMBING UP A WALL. NERDS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD FLOCK TO THE 20-PLUS TMBG WEB SITES, OR THE NEWSGROUP **ALT.MUSIC.TMBG**, TO DISCUSS WHY A BLUE CANARY WOULD FILIBUSTER OR DEBATE WHY TRIANGLE MAN IS SO FILLED WITH HATE.

THE VOICES MOST GLARINGLY ABSENT FROM THESE DEBATES ARE THOSE OF JOHN LINNELL AND JOHN FLANSBURGH. THE TWO HEAD GIANTS ARE NO LUDDITES. THEY'RE AWARE OF THE OVERWHELMING TROVE OF VIRTUAL BAND INFORMATION, AND THEY OCCASIONALLY SURF THE WEB. STILL, THEY STAY CALMLY ABOVE THE FRAY.

THE TWO ORIGINAL GIANTS (COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE JOHNS), BEST KNOWN FOR THE NERDY COLLEGE-RADIO HITS "DON'T LET'S START" AND "BIRDHOUSE IN YOUR SOUL," HAVE WRITTEN AND CONTRIBUTED EXTENSIVELY TO THE OFFICIAL THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS PAGE (**WWW.TMBG.COM**)—A SITE THAT FITS THE BAND'S QUIRKY PERSONALITY. AMONG THE DELIGHTS LURKING BEHIND THE OPENING PAGE SITE MAP OF A SPIT ROASTING VARIOUS ITEMS OVER AN OPEN FIRE ARE: OBSCURE FACTS LIKE THE BAND'S FAVORITE HOCKEY TEAM ("THE BRUINS. SHOOT SCORE BOBBY ORR!"); THE ORIGINS OF DIAL-A-SONG, AN ANSWERING MACHINE THAT PLAYS NEW OR UNRELEASED MATERIAL FOR FANS; MUSIC AND TOUR NEWS; VIDEO AND SONG CLIPS; AND EVEN AN EXTENSIVE CATALOG OF T-SHIRTS, MOUSE PADS AND YES, JOHN HENRY BLEND GOURMET COFFEE.

THE JOHNS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED WITH TECHNOLOGY, FROM THE TITLE OF 1992'S *APOLLO 18* TO THE BAND'S EARLY EXPERIMENTS WITH DRUM MACHINES AND BOUNCY SYNTHESIZER EFFECTS. LINNELL, THOUGH, SAYS HE'D RATHER LIE ON A RUG WITH AN ENCY-

clopedia than sit in an office chair staring at a screen. "I don't surf the Web anymore," says the singer-saxophonist-keyboardist-songwriter, during a phone interview from a Richmond, Ky., hotel room, where he was relaxing before a tax-day show at Eastern Kentucky University. But even though he's not surfing anymore, he's glad to share his thoughts about the legions of TMBG fans online, AltaVista and his old Britannica.

Internet Underground: There's a huge, incredibly detailed FAQ (**reality.sgi.com/relph/music/TMBG-FAQ.html**) on one of the unofficial They Might Be Giants home pages—it has a thorough biography of turn-of-the-century journalist William Allen White, whose face appears on one of your CD single covers, and an explanation of the palindrome in "I Palindrome I." Have you ever read it? How weird is it that the Internet lets so many people from around the world discuss your lyrical references?

John Linnell: I think that's fine. I think it's probably helping us in some way keep our whole thing afloat, keep people interested—and it's a great way for information about shows and stuff to get distributed. We sort of see it as another outlet, along the lines of Dial-A-Song, for us to get our scene out there.

I'm not so interested in the fantasy of interactive media. It doesn't light my fire all that much. For what we do, I prefer it to be a controlled thing where we're creating something and then presenting it. It's not so critical to me that people are able to fiddle around with what we're doing. I guess I don't really see that as the way we want to work. There's a lot of excitement and hype about interactive stuff but that's not really where I'm at.

IU: How come?

JL: My main argument against it is I just haven't seen that much interesting work done using computers interactively. We've had a couple thousand years of culture where that wasn't happening—and that turned out a pretty good body of work. That's not to say it won't happen, but I guess I'm kind of old-fashioned. And I'm kind of old, at this point.

There needs to be somebody else to demonstrate that it can be an interesting art form. I guess John (Flansburgh) and I are real control freaks. I know there's this Peter Gabriel CD-ROM where you can mix one of his songs yourself. Well, in a way, the whole point of mixing is to demonstrate the way you want it to be mixed. It's not an improvement to give it to other people to mix.

But, you know, whatever. I'm just a grumpy old man.

IU: Do you use the Web much? Do you go out and use e-mail and surf?

JL: I have a PPP connection that I can get to from the road. But it's mainly good for just finding out specific information that I want to know. I've doodled around on the Web and it can be a real time-waster. But I like AltaVista and things like that for getting information. It's a great way of finding out something when you don't have an encyclopedia handy.

IU: Do you read the They Might Be Giants mailing lists or newsgroups or think about what your fans are typing about you?

JL: I've seen it. I try not to look at it because I think that it's not really a fair critique of what we're doing. I feel like I'm better off not paying too much attention. I like the fact that people are talking to each other about our shows, though. I think that's good.

IU: What about the way the Internet can be used to connect with fans—which you can't do when they're just shouting out questions after a concert?

JL: I guess it's not something I wanted to do before there was an Internet. I never really felt like I needed to make friends with fans. I think we have a pretty good relationship with our audience as it is and occasionally we meet people we like. But we're not trying to meet fans. We're not actively looking to go out into our audience.

Maybe it's even better to make friends with people who aren't fans of ours. I'm generally on a more even keel with somebody who isn't somebody who wants my autograph. I feel like that's a weird relationship to start off with. I deeply appreciate that we have fans and that they're supportive of what we're doing. But I like meeting people on a level footing. I have a lot of friends in New York—people I've known for a long time—and I feel like those are valuable friendships. I think it's very difficult to make meaningful, lasting friendships among people who are kind of fanatics.

IU: I'm getting the sense that you don't dial up AOL very often and go into the chat rooms and try to meet people.

JL: No, no. I'm not into that. Besides, I'm married. I have a social life that's, like, pretty much all I can handle at the moment.

IU: Your biography sheet refers to a bike accident that you had in the early '80s. You couldn't perform, so you and John invented Dial-A-Song, where people could call an answering machine [it's still functioning at (718) 387-6962] to hear new songs. If the Internet had actually been more widespread, would you have wound up using that instead?

JL: I broke my wrist on my bike, so the Internet would have been pretty useless. I couldn't use my hand.

The problem was we couldn't perform and we couldn't even really record. The other thing was we had some gear stolen around the same time.

TMBG's Johns: Linnell (left) and Flansburgh

So it was kind of like this point where we had to stop doing shows. And Flansburgh had the idea of Dial-A-Song awhile back and we felt like this was the time to start checking it out—seeing whether we'd get in trouble.

I think the Internet could serve the same function under different circumstances. I kind of like the idea of working at home and being able to broadcast from my home. It remains to be seen—I know it's still this growing thing. I guess I still have this feeling that people should get out of their houses and breathe some fresh air. Not that you would do that at a nightclub.

"THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THE WEB—IT DOESN'T GIVE ME THAT MUCH PLEASURE"

IU: When you and John sit down to write songs, how do you come up with the ideas? Is it a big brainstorming session, or do you write things down on notebooks and show them to each other?

JL: There are often times when one of us will have an idea, like when we're out somewhere—I have paperback books kicking around my house that have stuff written in the margins, just because that was the only thing to write on. Both of us have little home setups with recording gear and stuff. My thing is I often wake up in the morning, get in the shower and I suddenly have this thing in my head. If I'm lucky, there's the opportunity to work on that throughout the day. But sometimes it really is just necessary to scribble it down and try to figure out what the hell I was thinking later on.

IU: You've used lots of different technological ideas as inspiration, like space. Do you ever think about the Internet for ideas?

JL: No. It's never seemed inspiring, particularly.

IU: When you started performing with a band on the road, what was the transition like? How difficult was it to adapt?

JL: I don't think we really knew what we were getting into, exactly. We've been touring this way for so long now it just seems normal. We have grown accustomed to waking up in a different hotel room every day. I don't think it's healthy, but we pretty much know what it's like and we can sustain ourselves. It doesn't get easier as we get older. It got easier in the first few years of it, because when we started we were not getting enough money performing—we were staying in the occasional Super 8 motel but we were also crashing on people's couches and stuff and that got pretty difficult.

IU: Do you think about marketing and promotion over the Internet? And, more broadly, do you think the Internet will ever make significant changes, like making traditional radio stations or record stores obsolete?

JL: I think that, yeah, things are definitely going to change. I can't predict how exactly. Before the Internet can be a real mass-market thing, there's still this barrier for people. It's still a little bit difficult to access stuff on the Internet for people who are used to watching TV. I think what will end up happening is people's TVs will get integrated with that. Once it gets really simple—I mean, really simple, like to the point where the technology's invisible—then you could market stuff effectively and have people buying movies and records on their TVs. But who knows how it's going to work out? It has to be a lot simpler. I can get out on the Web, but I don't think my mom is particularly interested. I just don't think it's something she wants to do.

IU: What are your favorite sites on the Web?

JL: Oh, our own, of course. I like AltaVista, because it's a great way to get information quickly. I guess AltaVista is my favorite place.

IU: Have you ever come across a great site on the Web where you thought, 'I can't believe someone wasted time doing this?'

JL: Right. And then I realize it's me. I'm the one wasting time.

IU: How often a week then would you say you surf the Web?

JL: I don't surf the Web any more. At this point on the road I'm mostly traveling and performing and sleeping. But if I do need to find out something that's where I'll go—for example, I was trying to figure out where this comet was last week and I tried to find out through the Internet. And it was sort of somewhat helpful. It came up with a picture of the comet with a grid in the sky that shows where it's supposed to be.

But as it turned out, later that week, I looked up and could just see it very plainly.

IU: I guess that's a telling comment about the Internet.

JL: Well, not necessarily. It's kind of a good place to get information, but sometimes it's kind of work, you know.

I have a really good encyclopedia at home, it's an old Britannica. And it's really fun to sit around and read. It doesn't hurt your eyes. You can just lie on the rug and read it and just flip around and the articles are really well-written and interesting. And it's a great source of information. I think that's the problem with the Web—it doesn't give me that much pleasure.

e-ttachment Opener

by Dataviz

$39.00

★★★★

The ability to attach files to a message makes e-mail one of the most popular ways of transporting data across the Net. But due to differences in operating systems and the large number of e-mail programs in use today, some attachments arrive in your mailbox as a mess of meaningless characters.

Dataviz's e-ttachment Opener addresses the problem of misbehaving attachments as well as two other common e-mail problems: files from programs you don't have, and compressed or zipped files. It addresses all three of these common attachment ailments using an unobtrusive and straightforward interface.

People regularly approach me with files they can't open because they don't know what program to use. The e-ttachment Opener searches the file for clues as to its origin and automatically opens it using the appropriate application. If you don't have that application, e-ttachment will try to open the file for viewing and printing with another similar program.

The decompression utility works with .zip, .gzip, .z, .tar and .hqx (BinHex) files. I currently use another decompression utility to open these types of files, so I was happy to see that during installation, e-ttachment allowed me to keep my existing association for those files. This is a feature other software developers need to use more often.

The program's method for achieving its main goal, fixing up screwy e-mail attachments, is not entirely automated. You have to copy and save the entire message, then run the e-ttachment software. The file is scanned for meaningful information, decoded (supports uuEncode and MIME), and saved into a folder for viewing. If the message comes to you in multiple parts, paste each part into a single WordPad document (in the correct order) and then activate the software. For some reason, you'll be unable to save the attachment to your desktop, but that's only a minor inconvenience.

If you're regularly the victim of unopenable files and attachments, this software might just be what you need. But don't get all excited, mistakenly thinking that you can finally piece together those multipart posts from alt.binaries.pictures.erotica. We tried...it doesn't work.

—Troy Brophy

Hip Pocket Guide to HTML 3.2

by Ed Tittel and James Michael Stewart

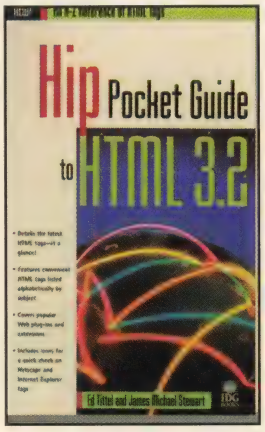
IDG Books

$14.95

★★★

After browsing the *Hip Pocket Guide to HTML 3.2* for a few minutes, I was unable to determine whether I was looking at a guide suitable for carriage in the "hip" pocket of my smoking jacket or a pocket guide with a cool attitude. I ruled out the former, due to the size of the "lay-flat" bound tome, and discovered it wasn't the latter after reading the back cover. Apparently "hip" is used to mean current and up-to-date. OK.

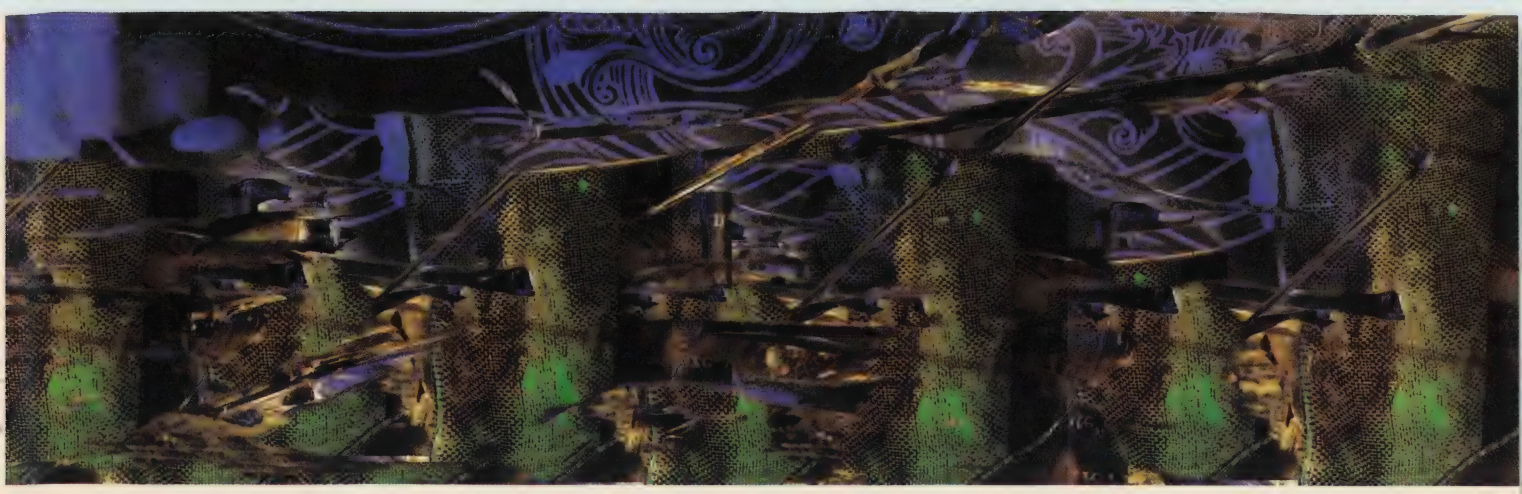
The guide tries to fill a gap on the reference shelf by collecting all of the tags



used in coding Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), specifically version 3.2, in a small, convenient book. Now I know that the 3.2 means something to somebody, but to me, either the tag works in both Internet Explorer and Netscape or it doesn't. I was happy to see that the guide not only lists nearly all of the currently used HTML tags both alphabetically and by association, but also tells you whether it works in only one or both of the top browsers.

I'm not sure why a brief history of HTML, as well as 20 or so pages of URLs for Web sites, was included in the book. They only help to clutter the contents. Perhaps someone felt the need to justify the $15 price tag. But for the money, this is a helpful reference tool for a coding language that's always changing. I would prefer to see each tag and its usage discussed in more depth, but with examples of tag usage, it serves as a good starting point.

Everybody knows that the best way to learn how to code HTML is to look at other peoples' code to see how they did it. But



it's good to have a place to start, especially if the only alternative is combing the Net for a site using the code you're trying to figure out.

—E. L. Wood

NetTravel: How Travelers Use the Internet

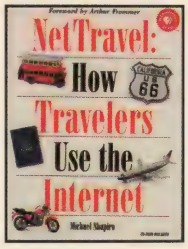
BY MICHAEL SHAPIRO

O'RIELLY

$24.95

★★★★½

Full disclosure time. Michael Shapiro, the author of this book, is a frequent contributor to *Internet Underground*. In fact, last month we published an article by him, strangely enough, on Net travel. That said, I wondered if it was fair to review his book at all. After reading the book, I decided it would be unfair not to review it, because it just happens to be an excellent piece of work.



Shapiro, a former editor with *WebReview* and currently an editor at C|Net, has put together an excellent guide for anyone who loves to travel and who knows how to log on. This isn't some quickie book consisting of obvious tips and a bland list of URLs; Shapiro covers all of the bases. In the book, you'll find great advice on the basics of Net traveling like making airline reservations online and searching for unique places to stay. But Shapiro wisely includes more advanced topics like instructions for staying connected to the Net while you travel and an explanation of how travel agents use the Web. One particularly illuminating section deals with the rigors of traveling with a laptop. The book is also filled with numerous first-person accounts, which keep the chapters engaging, but also help illustrate the usefulness for the advice being offered.

Only two things keep this from being a five-star review. At $24.95, the book is a little pricey for a paperback, and I hate those arguments about how using the advice in the book will save you money in the long run. Secondly, *NetTravel* comes with a CD-ROM that doesn't contain anything useful, like instant links to the hundreds of URLs in the book. Rather, the CD-ROM is yet another spam disc courtesy Steve Case.

Those minor complaints aside, I realize this review sounds awfully obsequious, but the book really is that good. If you're a frequent traveler, you'll soon find your copy of *NetTravel* a dog-eared, Post-it Note-filled, underlined, best friend.

—Alex Gordon

The 75 Most Erogenous Zones in Cyberspace

BY ALISON GRIPPO

$14.95

WOLFF NEW MEDIA

★

The other review on this page talks about a shining example of a Net reference book. *The 75 Most Erogenous Zones in Cyberspace* is not that book. First of all, any work published in 16-point type that's not for kids makes me a little dubious (is the author stretching?). After reading the book, my doubts were more than confirmed. Beyond the intro, which is filled with such paradigm-altering advice for men as "talk a little to the women you're about to get down with" and for women as "do not shy away from a room filled with wanting men," the book is nothing more than site reviews of 75 online hot spots like Bianca's Smut Shack and HotChat. How Grippo can claim these are the "75 Most Erogenous Zones" is beyond comprehension. Other spots on her list include the benign New Age Web Personals and Computerized Matchmaking Online, and some downright raunchy IRC channels like #bisexorgy and #wetsex. Mostly, she relates her experiences in each zone, which after about two or three of the 75 zones becomes about as engaging as having your aunt relate her experiences in her 75 favorite shoe stores. For instance, there's this tale of her experiences on #!!!!!!!!!!!!cyberfucking: "Next thing I knew I was in a brand

new room called '5sum' performing acts even Kerri Strug wouldn't get a perfect 10 for." Man, that's hot stuff! Do yourself a favor, if you're interested in spicy online material, save yourself $14.95 and just enter a random raunchy term into a search engine. Soon enough, you'll find a place to get your jollies and you'll have plenty of cash left over for a new box of Kleenex.

—Otto Sanford

a closer look at this month's #1 site

Toast just might be the perfect food. In almost no time it pops up hot and crunchy, packed with nutrients from the ever-important bottom of the food pyramid and able to support anything from Parkay and peanut butter to marmalade or chipped beef.

But without a worthy toaster, you might as well chew on plain old bread. "(The toaster) is a real functional thing," says Eric Norcross, co-founder of the Toaster Museum Foundation. "There's a real comforting thing about toast. It's a cheap thing, an artist's food. The toaster is sort of an American icon."

First successfully produced in 1909, early toasters were creations that owed more to Rube Goldberg or Constantin Brancusi than the assembly lines of Taiwan. At the Toaster Museum Foundation site, Norcross, 34, and his wife Kelly Godfrey, 29, celebrate a past in which toasters were works of art rather than the disposable clones that line the shelves of Wal-Mart today.

The couple own more than 500 toasters, a collection that represents the history of the appliance and traces a century of industrial design. Selections from their impressive collection are on display online (**www.spiritone.com/~ericn/index.html**), and, for now, that's the only place to see them.

It wasn't always that way.

In 1988, the couple opened an art gallery in the Capitol Hill area of Seattle and helped pay the rent by selling coffee out of a small kitchen in the back. Around that time, they began collecting vintage toasters from area antique shops, flea markets and garage sales. Eventually they installed a toaster at each table and patrons were able to order their favorite bread, toast it at their table and top it off with a selection of 25 different toppings. The café closed in 1990 when they were unable to renew their lease, and the toasters were moved to a downtown art gallery. Norcross and Godfrey then began giving impromptu tours of their extensive collection and attracting the attention of art connoisseurs and dedicated toaster collectors alike.

Unfortunately, they were once again unable to secure a long-term lease and the gallery closed. The couple then moved down the coast to Portland in an effort to start over, but they couldn't afford to launch another business. Norcross, a self-described "unemployed entrepreneur and occasional artist" turned to the Web for help. He launched his site late last year in an effort to raise funds for a new permanent home for the collection. "So far response has been really good," he says. "A couple of people have sent in money, a toaster has been donated, a few people have called wanting to sell us a toaster and we have heard from a lot of other collectors."

The foundation's immediate goal is to return the toasters to a public viewing space. After that, they hope to enhance their collection with more rare and unique toasters and toaster memorabilia. They also dream of creating a traveling display that would be loaned out to museums, galleries and libraries.

"We want to have traveling exhibits to try to inspire designers today to aspire to heights of old," he says. "The toaster shouldn't be so low on the totem pole. A beautiful object enriches the whole tapestry." To encourage more donations, they are applying for federal non-profit status so that donations will be tax-deductible and are looking for corporate support. Norcross insists that the foundation would be the perfect charity for a major toaster manufacturer such as Hammond Beach/Proctor-Silex or Black & Decker.

But for now the toasters are on display in nearly every room of the couple's house, while hundreds more toasters remain packed away in their basement. So unless you're lucky enough to be invited over for breakfast, the only way to peruse the collection is via the Web. The foundation's site features an informative illustrated history of the toaster (no toaster oven, please), from its Victorian-era inception to the modern day introduction of bagel-toasting capabilities.

Additional sections of the site are devoted to toaster art, toys and antique advertisements. Many of the finest examples of toaster design and technology, from the Toast-o-Lator's viewing window to TravlToast's car cigarette lighter attachment, are also featured.

The site proves that toast is indeed a timeless treat. Despite a bounty of bread fads over the years—from croissants and, pitas to bagels and scones—toast has endured. "Toast is so basic," Norcross explains. "It's so classic. It has persevered forever since people decided they would rather gather than hunt. Even today, with all these choices, people still want a loaf of bread." Godfrey adds, "It's a comfort food, an instant hot food and it smells good."

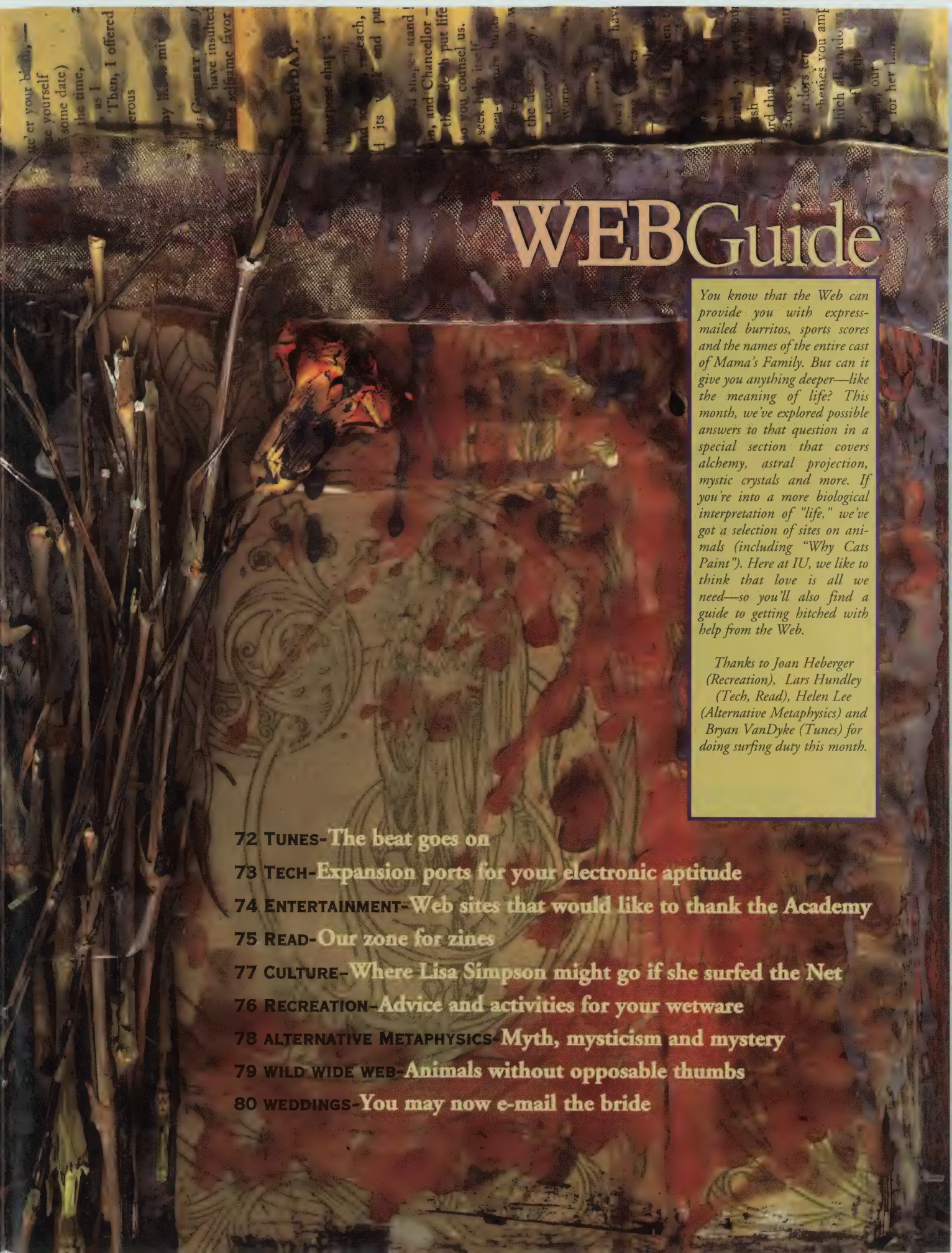
(To help the foundation, send donations, office supplies or toasters to: Toaster Museum Foundation, P.O. Box 11886, Portland, OR 97211-0886)

by Craig Aaron

SPOTLIGHT

The Toaster Museum Foundation

www.spiritone.com/~ericn/index.html



WEBGuide

You know that the Web can provide you with express-mailed burritos, sports scores and the names of the entire cast of Mama's Family. But can it give you anything deeper—like the meaning of life? This month, we've explored possible answers to that question in a special section that covers alchemy, astral projection, mystic crystals and more. If you're into a more biological interpretation of "life," we've got a selection of sites on animals (including "Why Cats Paint"). Here at IU, we like to think that love is all we need—so you'll also find a guide to getting hitched with help from the Web.

Thanks to Joan Heberger (Recreation), Lars Hundley (Tech, Read), Helen Lee (Alternative Metaphysics) and Bryan VanDyke (Tunes) for doing surfing duty this month.

72 TUNES-The beat goes on

73 TECH-Expansion ports for your electronic aptitude

74 ENTERTAINMENT-Web sites that would like to thank the Academy

75 READ-Our zone for zines

77 CULTURE-Where Lisa Simpson might go if she surfed the Net

76 RECREATION-Advice and activities for your wetware

78 ALTERNATIVE METAPHYSICS-Myth, mysticism and mystery

79 WILD WIDE WEB-Animals without opposable thumbs

80 WEDDINGS-You may now e-mail the bride

ROCKHALL.COM

www.rockhall.com

If you want to take a cyberstroll through the music version of a dinosaur museum, check out the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's page. They offer clips from inductees, online versions of their exhibits and biographies of musicians that your parents loved. Now, we have to admit, from

the 500 Songs That Shaped Rock, to the Album Cover exhibits and the select entries for individual bands—this site covers more ground than a decade's worth of *Rolling Stone*. In the end, yeah, this Web site is amazingly dolled up: It shimmies, it warbles and it's got glitter and pomp—but so did fat Elvis in Las Vegas. It's worth a stop, though it all seems a little bit corporate for music that's supposed to be just a singer, a red guitar, three chords and the truth?

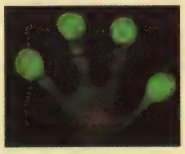
★★★★★

our pick

911 ENTERTAINMENT

www.911entertainment.com

They call it 911 because the faint-hearted may have a heart attack after being dazzled by the graphics at this recording label's site.



You have a choice between Hear It, See It and Lick It—yes, Lick It. Hear It refers to musical selections from alternative bands, See It delivers some QuickTime videos and Lick It means a multimedia blitz of information about the bands 911 offers. This is not a test—dial in now.

★★★★★

BON JOVI HOME PAGE

www.polygram.com/bonjovi/BonJovi.html

Eighties superstars Bon Jovi have not been neglected on the Web, and Polygram delivers a rare gem for fans of these glam rockers—samples of Jon's handwritten lyrics! Some dim band photos and video clips to the single off their latest album (yes, there has been one since 1989's *New Jersey*) are lurking here, too, but past those handwritten lyrics, the Bon Jovi page is nothing to croon about.

★★

LABEL SPINNERS

www.cafeinternet.co.uk/agency/CONTENTS.HTM

Whether you're interested in house, trip-hop or nearly any black-circle party sound, this site is your worldwide Rent-a-DJ center. If you are interested in hiring a DJ, no matter where you live, you need to check this booking agency's list of services. A funky style keeps their pages from being nothing more than a glorified catalog—and their sound review section spins out reviews of recent band releases.

★★★

LIQUID AUDIO

www.liquidaudio.com

Cool tuneage sites require that your machine can churn out hi-fi music—and for that, you need to keep up on the new sound applications for your browser. Liquid Audio has a smooth Web site and they deliver some clean sounds, which you can pick up for free. The sound quality is excellent and the plug-in comes in handy at the MTV CD Lounge, the VH1 Sound Shop and Music Boulevard.

★★★★

LIVECONCERTS.COM

www.liveconcerts.com

Plug your ear into exclusive listening parties for the release of new albums, or check out concerts like Son Volt on the road at this sizzling site. Liveconcerts.com presents RealAudio offerings, but they also provide clips on demand. They even feature wacky underground radio shows, like FM Dostoyevksy, a weekly radio show mixed and hosted by A.K. Troitsky—a must for those Russkie lovers.

★★★★★

OFFICIAL MEGADETH HOME PAGE

www.megadeth.com

You can't get much more underground than heavy metal these days—but former metal giants Megadeth make a run at the crown with a new album and this hypercharged Web site. Headbangers past and present can scope out MP3 audio clips of new album tracks, or hook up with other fans in an online chat room where people talk about everything *but* heavy metal. Their albums may not sell in the millions, but Megadeth's Web site is worth your time.

★★★★

THE OFFICIAL OASIS HOME PAGE

oasisinet.com

This is the band that smashes hotel rooms? For the Web site of a group with a badboy lead singer, the Oasis page is pretty tame—the usual gigography, sycophantic fan mail and outdated press releases. While there's some chewy stuff here in the way of a couple of cool band photos (Oasis at Abbey Road! Guitarist Noel pretending to be a Beatle!), for the most part, the site dissolves into sand after about five minutes of star-gazing.

★★

THE OFFICIAL RADIOHEAD HOME PAGE

www.radiohead.co.uk

It's straightforward, no messing around with Radiohead—and their Web site is no different. Disregard the sparse News and Tour sections, the crown jewel of this site is the crazy, acid-induced trip of the Other section. Long lists of completely random words and images of tin cans are offered in three artistic, crazy "Hard" versions; the one "Easy" version is a straightforward route which also offers band photos and catalog order forms.

★★★★

REED ORGANS

cs.bluffton.edu/~estell/organs/home.html

You, the MTV generation! If you don't know a reed organ from your pancreas, then this page is for you. Obscure musical hits (that don't have music videos), such as "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" and "Greensleeves" are offered online, along with a reed organ history. Not dangerous enough for you? Then risk reading the Reed Organ Survey of Musculoskeletal Pain. Not even the reed organ is entirely safe.

★★★

THE SEX PISTOLS

virginrecords.com/s_show/sex_pistols96.html

Yow! The puke-yellow background of the official Sex Pistols site portends the content: a Sex Pistols history that's a little bit gaudy, a gauche RealAudio slide show ("we don't do nothing that we don't get paid for!"), and, well, some good-natured punk fun. Other punk bands could take note from the shameless commercialism of the Sex Pistols' comeback—or at least enjoy this slick and extremely self-serving site. Hey, that's what punk is all about.

★★★★

///SPIDER'S\\\ SOUNDS OFF THE WEB

www.newreach.net/~sgiffen2/soundoff.htm

If you're looking for radio quality reproductions, surf on—but when it comes to MIDI, Spider's has most places outdone and outspun. Spider's has even been kind enough to compile a list of the most popular sounds—last time we looked, the Coca-Cola theme had just nudged "Macarena" out of the top space. The only problem with Spider's is the overabundant animated images—but hey, just grab the money, honey, and click the hell out of there.

★★★★

UTOPIA

www.city.ac.uk/AFKAP/prince/

U don't have 2 be an unpronounceable symbol to enjoy the Web page devoted to you know who, The Artist. Although it's geared toward people with high bandwidth connections, we still had fun at places like the KISS Web Wall, where random pictures of The Artist are displayed. Plus, between the usual photos and discographies, the scrambled Paisley Puzzle and Hang Man with song titles, we were clicking until we'd forgotten how to pronounce our own names.

★★★★★

CLICK-N-CALL

www.click-n-call.com

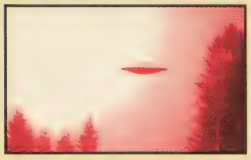
For the most part, Internet phones suck, because you can't call anyone unless they're online too and using the same software. Click-n-Call has tried to fix this by developing software you can put on your Web site that visitors can use to call you on a regular telephone. Sounds cool enough, but you have to wonder how well the technology actually works when you read the prominent message on the first page that says, "We are experiencing problems with the quality of our Internet connection." Visit the site and make a test call to try it out yourself.

★★★

FSR: FLYING SAUCER REVIEW

www.corpex.com/users/archmage/fsr/fsrhome.htm

Read about the latest UFO sightings around the world, and find editorials and articles like "Don't You Dare Harm Our People" and "UFOs Escorting Russian Space Station?" Believe it or not, FSR was launched way back in 1955, and it's been trucking along ever since. We learned that the term "flying saucer" dates back nearly 125 years ago, to Jan. 24, 1878, and was first used by a Texan farmer named John Martin (not "Martian").



★★★

HDTV NEWSLETTER

web-star.com/hdtv/hdtvnews.html

It's official. High Definition Television, or HDTV, will finally start to arrive in the United States by the end of next year. We're talking about television so crystal-clear that news stations are having to design new sets for their broadcasts because you can suddenly see that the desk is made of cheap plastic and that row of books on the wall is actually cardboard. Sure, the new sets might cost an arm and a leg when they first come out, but don't you think it's worth it? Read all about it here.

★★★

INTERNET WEATHER REPORT

www.internetweather.com

Ever wondered why the Web is so damn slow sometimes? If so, you can find out here at the Internet Weather Report site. The site rates the main Internet Service Providers based on 45 packet (one packet/second) ping tests with 210 byte packets between its Internet connection (a full T1) and the primary domain server for each network. Packet loss of more than 6 percent is considered "yellow" and more than 12 percent is "red." It's an interesting look at the Internet infrastructure.

★★★★

MR. SOLAR HOME PAGE

www.netins.net/showcase/solarcatalog/

If you've ever wished you could tell the electric company to take a hike, then you'll appreciate Mr. Solar, who has lived in Utah for the last 18 years completely on solar electricity. Find out how to set up your own solar electric system and where to buy the equipment, or sign up for an accredited college course on solar energy taught over the Internet. And then, kiss that electric bill goodbye.

★★★★

NATIONAL CAVES ASSOCIATION

www.cavern.com

Caves aren't just for hermits! Here at the National Caves Association official Web site, you'll learn all you need to know about "show caves," which are caverns and caves developed for public visitation. And we all know you'd rather visit a cave that's presented "with good taste, courtesy and hospitality during tours at regularly scheduled times." The cave FAQ was unfortunately "under construction" when we visited, so we never figured out for sure the difference between stalactites and stalagmites. Stalactites come from the ceiling, right?

★★

THE PHOTONICS RESOURCE CENTER

www.optics.org

Read about the newest photoreflectors with integrated modulator and pulsed laser spectrum analyzers, or search from a library of over 800,000 technical citations and abstracts at the Photonics Resource Center. With industry news, a guide to more than 3,000 prequalified companies, a patent and trademark search engine and an up-to-date list of new products, you'll be hard-pressed to find a more comprehensive site on optics.

★★★★

PRIMATE HANDEDNESS AND BRAIN LATERALIZATION RESEARCH SITE

www.indiana.edu/~primate/index.html

Find out "what handedness has to do with brain lateralization, and who cares about it." And while you're here, you might want to find out what brain lateralization is in the first place, if you don't already know. (It refers to the fact that the two halves of the human brain are not exactly alike and that each hemisphere has functional specializations.) If you have an extra 10 or 15 minutes, participate in ongoing research on human handedness by taking a hand preference questionnaire.

★★★★

PROFESSOR HIBBERT'S PERPETUAL MOTION PAGE

www.chem.unsw.edu.au/staff/hibbert/perpetual/

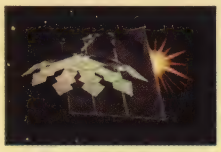
Don't stop moving! The U.S. Patent Office says, "The Office hesitates to accept fees from applicants who believe they have discovered Perpetual Motion, and deems it only fair to give such applicants a word of warning that fees cannot be recovered after the case has been considered by the Examiner." Read about the first and second laws of thermodynamics, check out some machines and decide for yourself.

★★★

RANDOM RESEARCH QUESTION GENERATOR

www.coedu.usf.edu/behavior/research/research.html

What are the effects of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder on television watching? Or the effects of morphine on group dynamics? You won't find any answers here, but you'll find plenty of strange questions. You can even add your own independent and dependent variables to the database to amuse future visitors. As the site puts it, "Scientists needing grants, professors up for tenure, 8th grade science fair contestants—Rejoice!"



★★★★

TELEDESIC

www.teledesic.com

"My Internet service provider is in outer space!" Backed by telecommunications company Craig McCaw and Bill Gates, and scheduled to begin service in 2002, the Teledesic Network will consist of a constellation of several hundred low-Earth-orbit satellites. If all goes according to plan, they'll provide two-way, broadband connections for applications such as voice, data, videoconferencing and high-performance Internet access. The future is going to be pretty cool.

★★★

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS TI-99/4A SITE

www.ncsc.dni.us/fun/user/tcc/cmuseum/ti99.htm

The poor TI-99/4A computer never really had much of a chance, but we still love it, because it reminds us of our childhood. One of the reasons it never caught on, according to this site devoted to the rarely purchased TI personal computer, is that "Bill Cosby was the pitchman. (Is there anything this man won't sell?) Commodore had William Shatner, who was much cooler." Good point—who wouldn't listen to Captain Kirk about buying a computer?

★★

THE '80S TV THEME SUPER SITE

www-leland.stanford.edu/~karimzad/

The rare first-episode *Cosby* theme, the mid-season variation on the *Dallas* theme, the perennially annoying *Facts of Life* jingle—they're all collected for your downloading pleasure at this site. And if re-experiencing the saccharine sounds of TV seasons past isn't what the Web was made for, well, we don't know what is.

★★

BUDDING HOLLYWOOD STARLETS OF THE REAL WORLD

www.tc.umn.edu/nlhome/m606/haug0066/realbhs.htm

Budding Hollywood Starlets is a Twin Cities garage band; in honor of their namesake starlets, its members have put up a page devoted to the careers of teen actresses like Rachael Leigh Cook and Larisa Oleynik. One of the band members even runs an endorsed fan site just for Rachael, where the bio explains, "She loves junk jewelry, rain, *American Gladiators*, stickers, heights and garage sales. She dislikes geometry and Latin, prickly sweaters, 100 degree temperatures, roller coasters, and old and crusty pencil erasers that don't erase."

★★

FOILED

www.hideaway.demon.co.uk/foiled.html

"Four students sharing a house in Manchester

are rudely interrupted one evening when their pizza-delivery man is attacked and taken over by one of a couple of aliens that have crash-landed their spacecraft in the vicinity..." That's the basic plot of this "no-budget feature film" in the making, chronicled on the Web by its young writer/director. The 26-year-old software engineer and aspiring filmmaker has more than a little help from his friends, who take part in the acting and production; it's slow going at times, but the progress, plot and plans for a better Foil Man costume make for fun reading here.

★★★

HOLLYWOOD'S COMING

www.c3f.com/hollywoo.html

The Internet isn't the enclave of geekdom it once was—and now that it's trendy, Hollywood's cashing in on the hype. This inventive site makes fun of the fumbling efforts of writers to hotwire their scripts with Net references, and makes suggestions on how to "retrofit" movies for the information age. *The Bridges of Madison County*, for example, could be made more "cyber" if the scene where Meryl Streep and Clint Eastwood kiss were replaced by one where they "log onto the WELL and get into a heated online debate about the utter worthlessness of heated online debates in determining the value of heated online debate."

★★★★

THE HOLLYWOOD RANT

www.trashfish.com/rant/

Part of an e-zine called *Trash Fish*, the Hollywood Rant is a cantankerous daily essay about the dreck on the studio slates. There's not much in the way of site design, but it does offer all the movie gossip you want with none of the fawning devotion to celebrity culture. Even stereotypically hip filmmaking (from Ingmar Bergman to David Cronenberg) comes in for criticism, making this a great visit for anyone whose view of movies skews toward the skeptical.

★★★★

SIMON'S FRANCES MCDORMAND PAGE

www.brunel.ac.uk:8080/~mapgsat/movies/mcdormand/

Simon runs a thorough page devoted to Christopher Walken, but has had a hard time digging up info on another favorite entertainer,

recent Oscar-winner Frances McDormand. Still, he's managed to pull together a filmography (in addition to appearing in the works of husband Joel Coen, she's been in movies like *Lone Star*, *Primal Fear* and *Mississippi Burning*) and a few pictures, with more promised when his class load lightens a little. We gotta give him some credit for at least singling McDormand out for praise before *Fargo* ever hit the screens.

★★

THE PICTURE PALACE

picpal.com

"I need a transcript of 'Who's On First' by Abbot and Costello—what film was it in?" The folks at the Picture Palace, a New Jersey store that sells (not rents) videos, are available to help with such e-mailed queries, should you have them. The store carries Bettie Page loop tapes and the nostalgically titillating flicks of Russ Meyer, plus plenty of other obscure cult classics; they even offer to help you track down titles you can't find elsewhere.

★★★

THE UNOFFICIAL TIM ROTH HOME PAGE

weber.u.washington.edu/~jenhwolf/timroth/index.html

Who is Tim Roth? This page devoted to the hip British character actor provides a terrifically complete answer; among the tidbits we gleaned from the comprehensive Tim Roth FAQ were that he likes Rage Against the Machine, has a subscription to *The Guardian* and, in his own words, doesn't "know a bloody thing about computers."

★★★★★

SCI-FI CHANNEL: THE DOMINION

www.scifi.com

The Sci-Fi Channel may be the biggest source for science fiction on cable TV, but staking the same claim on the Net is a little more difficult—there's way more competition. Dominion

is a decent try, though; it has an appropriately futuristic, nonlinear look and feel, with some fun, original fiction and articles. Visit the Seeing Ear Theater for RealAudio versions of classic radio shows, plus original RA plays like "Into the Sun" (featuring the voice of Mark Hamill. Is that supposed to be a good thing?).

★★★

SUE'S REVIEWS

www2.lucidcafe.com/lucidcafe/suezrevz.html

We have to like a gal who'd construct a set of movie reviews around *Melrose Place* actresses. Susan Woita's page appears on the Lucidcafé site; it has a simple design with short reviews and frequent updates. Sometimes the reviews are a little too short (Sue doesn't always remember to mention who's in the movie, or who directed it), but it's nice to be able to get this kind of unbiased, at-a-glance view of what's out in theaters and what's new on video.

★★★

THE VIEW ASKEW-NIVERSE

www.viewaskew.com

View Askew is the production company of writer/director Kevin Smith (*Clerks*, *Mallrats*),

and this site is simply a promo for its movies, particularly the latest in Smith's "New Jersey Trilogy," *Chasing Amy*. But it manages to be simultaneously slick and intelligent; we particularly liked the commentary from the players themselves. At last, Silent Bob speaks out!

★★★★

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF SEINFELD?

www.uta.edu/english/mal/sein/seinfeld.html

Subtitled "the aesthetic reception of a situation comedy," this site from a Texas grad student is a critique of critiques of America's favorite "show about nothing." The proposition that

what you think of a (literary or, in this case, broadcast) work says more about you than it does about the work isn't exactly new; still, it's fun to read social commentary that revolves around the realistic and the fantastic, the trivial and the meaningful, the goyish and the Jewish.

★★

AN ENTIRELY OTHER SITE
www.etext.org/Zines/EOD/
What began in 1994 as periodic e-mail to friends about the life and experiences of Greg Knauss has become An Entirely Other Site.

An Entirely Other Site

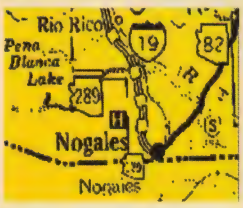
Greg is also a contributor to *Suck*, so you know he must be somewhat cool. If you're looking for fancy graphics or Java, you're in the wrong place, because the site consists almost entirely of text. But it's damn good reading and, hey, it loads on the screen a lot faster this way.
★★★★

ATLAS
www.atlasmagazine.com
You'll want to turn down your speakers when you visit this site or you'll be forced to endure annoying music. But once you get past that minor distraction, you'll find a beautifully designed site filled with illustrations, photographs and multimedia experiments. The designers have been careful to keep loading times reasonable despite the graphic-heavy content, making the site an enjoyable experience even at 28.8 modem speeds.
★★★

BAD TEEN ANGST POETRY
www.cyberperk.com/angst/angst.htm
Admit it—you've written at least one bad teen angst poem in your life, and probably a lot more. According to the makers of this site, the only way to get past the shame of it all is to submit your bad poem to be displayed for the world to see. The poems are arranged by age, but don't think they get any better as the poets get older. "Squirmy the Worm" was written by a 16-year-old. "My worm is squirmy / Cold and wet and grey and mush / He's kind of germy."

★★★

BUDZINE
www.azstarnet.com/~jdbanks/budzine.htm
Self-described as "an eclectic communication of information," *Budzine* is apparently the work of someone named John Banks, although it never really says for sure anywhere on the site as far as we could tell. You'll find everything from somber stories like "Adventures in Bad Credit," which tells how overspending and denial eventually lead to bankruptcy court, to more lighthearted works such as "The Joys of Coffee."



★★★

CYBERMAD
www.cybermad.com
At *Cybermad*'s Culture Department, you'll find bizarre and entertaining articles such as Eddie and Dawg's guide to achieving world domination. "9. Build a huge metal monkey with an Elvis hairdo wearing a gold lamé suit to stomp all big cities to the tune of 'Heartbreak Hotel'—'Since my baby left me—STOMP STOMP—I found a new place to dwell — STOMP STOMP…'" While you're at the site, try out the insult-a-rama. We got "Bill Gates makes more in a day than you'll make in a lifetime." Ouch.

★★★★

E—THE ENVIRONMENTAL MAGAZINE
www.emagazine.com
In Asia, jellyfish are considered a delicacy. It's opened up a new market for Florida fishermen, but does harvesting jellyfish hurt leatherback turtles, who depend on them as their main source of food? *E*, the Web version of a magazine of the same title, explores environmental issues such as these with balance and insight. We were astounded to find out that lawnmowers and boat engines account for five percent of the total national summertime level of hydrocarbon pollution in urban air. Sounds like as good excuse as any not to mow the grass this summer.

★★★

GRAND TIMES
www.grandtimes.com
Who says elderly folks aren't on the Web? *Grand Time* is a weekly magazine for "active older adults" that describes itself as "controversial,entertaining and informative." Controversial? If the conservative white background and large black text aren't obvious enough to illustrate the target audience, then perhaps articles like "Avoiding Probate: How a Living Trust Can Help Preserve Your Estate" or the links to Widow Net and The Bingo Bugle will clear it up for you. We were disappointed that we couldn't find anything at all about Matlock.
★★

HAIKU HEADLINES OF THE DAY
www.onix.com/steelyda/headline.htm
Who needs CNN when you can get the day's headlines written in the form of a haiku, the elegant Japanese style of poetry? Updated daily, the site includes international and national news, business, weather, op-ed, sports and even technology. "FCC clears way / for HDTV. Now smurfs / are even bluer!" Even the ads are written as haikus. Have you written your own haiku headline? Submit it and it could appear here, along with your byline.
★★★★

HIGH TIMES
www.hightimes.com

Potheads of the world, unite. This Web version of *High Times* features articles from the magazine as well as market prices for marijuana around the country, information on drug laws and a catalog of products made from hemp. In the glossary, we learned that a "cocktail" is a joint of tobacco and marijuana combined and that an "elbow" is a pound of pot. Don't miss the interesting legal disclaimer.
★★★

ITP REVIEW
www.itp.tsoa.nyu.edu/~review/
This webzine comes from the Tisch School of The Arts at New York University. Don't be fooled into thinking that a site run by students is somehow less impressive or well-made. The design has the slick look of professionally run sites like *Feed* or *Word*. Each article includes an interactive section where readers can post their own comments and read what others have had to say.
★★★

STREET WALL JOURNAL
c3f.com/ntytoday.html

This sendup of *The Wall Street Journal* will leave you chuckling. You'll find stories like "Technology May Be a Load of Shit, MIT Study Finds" and "Survey Shows Bus Drivers Prefer Angel Dust Over DMT!" The *Street Wall Journal* bills itself as the "Net's only daily satire column." We don't know if that's true or not, but we're keeping it bookmarked anyway.
★★★★

TEEVEE
search.intertext.com/teevee/noframes.html
Why watch television when you can read about it on the Web instead? The mean commentary on *Beverly Hill 90210*'s Tori Spelling alone makes this site worth a look. Or, as they would call her, "The nasally voiced, surgically enhanced, bug-eyed, bleach-blonde waif with the formidable jawbone." Reading about the boob tube has never been this much fun.
★★★

WOMAN MOTORIST
www.womanmotorist.com
Who says women don't care about cars as much as men? *Woman Motorist* runs the gamut "from automotive safety, maintenance, car shopping, racing, advocacy and travel to information about automotive manufacturers' participation in our communities." Men shouldn't feel left out, though. They'll also find plenty of good stuff here—like the review of the Oscar Mayer Wiener Mobile entitled "Top Dog Meets Top Gun."

★★★

WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION: IDEA, EXPERIENCE, AFTERMATH

xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/title.html

Hypertext history doesn't get much better than this virtual tour of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. It's clear from the text what a massive undertaking the fair was: 14 "great" buildings in the Beaux-Arts style, highlighting different technological and agricultural achievements. Pictures and descriptions of the fair help give a visitor's point of view: After braving "rain and mud, blistering heat and the occasional pickpocket" they got to view such exhibits as the Fisheries Building's "double row of floor-to-ceiling aquaria, filled with hundreds of species of fresh and salt water fish." Lunch could be had at concession stands, which sold "the newly introduced carbonated soda," or sit-down restaurants which served such delicacies as "clam chowder, baked beans and pumpkin pie." In addition to the experiential descriptions, the site details the legacy of the fair. Not only did it meet its goals to celebrate technology and commerce, and to encourage popular education, it marked the debut of a number of consumer products that are still around today: "Cream of Wheat, Shredded Wheat, Pabst Beer, Aunt Jemima syrup and Juicy Fruit gum."

★★★★★

our pick

ART HISTORIANS' GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

www.rci.rutgers.edu/~eliason/ahgttm.htm

To find out what college professors do on the Internet, check out this site, a listing of art and architecture references in movies. Maintained by a Rutgers Ph.D. candidate, it includes contributions from dozens of academics with an eye for art in their entertainment: Among other things, we learned that the Monty Python sketch "The Penultimate Supper" "nicely parodies the controversy over Veronese's 'Christ in the House of Levi.'"

★★

THE BLUE MOON REVIEW

www.TheBlueMoon.com

An online literary magazine is easy to put together—take a couple of previously unpublished stories or poems, put them up on the

Web, and you're done. Putting together a successful online literary magazine is harder, but *The Blue Moon Review* has done an excellent job with its thrice-annual Web publication. Its editors have a particular interest in finding promising new writers, but that doesn't mean they're not selective as to quality—the fiction and poetry here are well worth the read. When you're done, check out the list of links to other literary e-zines.

★★★★★

CANADIAN ACTORS' BITCH PAGE

www.ica.net/pages/coco/index.htm

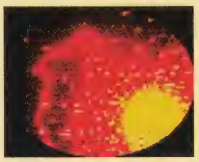
No, this is not the place to come if you wanna be Michael J. Fox's bitch; it's a place for Canadian actors to complain about film and theatre auditions, or American actors who come to Canada to film movies and treat the locals with disdain. Tim Allen, for example, yelled at a sales clerk in Yorkville while filming *The Santa Clause*. There's not much at this site but, well, maybe there aren't that many Canadian actors.

★

COSMIC BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

www.clark.net/pub/cosmic/cba1.html

Baseball is "really just a metaphor for the life of the mind." Cosmic Baseball, therefore, draws on human history and human thought to create teams of players; the teams are then pitted against one another in a software program that sounds like something out of



Foucault's Pendulum. It's hard to figure out just who's behind this battle of archetypal gladiators, but it's worth reading for the cosmically weird juxtapositions: In one team, "20th century writers dominate the overall roster (Corso, Ginsberg, Joyce, Kersade, H. Miller, and Nin) but the Beat Generation writers (Corso, Ginsberg) lost a representative (Whalen has been traded back to the Dharma Beats)."

★★★

THE INDEPENDENT READER

www.independentreader.com

Volumes, volumes, volumes...If bookstores are overwhelming for you, you may find this collection of reading recommendations useful. It's a collaborative effort by such independent bookstores as Powell's in Portland and Prairie Lights in Iowa City. Each provides a few top picks every month, and each has something of its own slant—Women and Children First spotlights women authors, while Harvard Book Store tends to recommend New England Book Award winners—so chances are you'll find something that grabs your attention.

★★★★

THE ISLE OF LESBOS

www.sappho.com

In addition to presenting a variety of lesbian images and poetry, this site provides "Yoohoo! Lesbians," a thorough directory of sites for women-oriented women in categories like Health & Sexuality, History & Education and Protecting Our Rights. We especially liked the collection of lesbian quotations, like this from "music artists" Two Nice Girls: "We love men. We just don't want to see them naked."

★★★★

PULP FICTION CENTRAL

www.vintagelibrary.com/pulp/index.htm

John Travolta's character's penchant for pulp played into the title of the movie *Pulp Fiction*—other fans of the genre will find some fun history and excerpts featuring "Bigger-than-life heroes, pretty girls, exotic places, [and] strange and mysterious villains." True aficionados can set up an account at Vintage Library to buy paperback titles like *Selected Tales of Grim and Grue From the Horror Pulps*.

★★

STOMP

www.usinteractive.com/stomp/

What started as the routine of a group of street performers has become a slick, professional and highly commercialized touring show for theatergoers worldwide. This official Web site fills in visitors on some background about the creators and choreography behind the synchronized sounds of Stomp; if you've never heard of it, check out the QuickTime movies and sounds for examples of fun things to do with bins, bats, boxes and Zippo lighters.

★★

TOWER OF LONDON

www.voicenet.com/~dravyk/toltour/

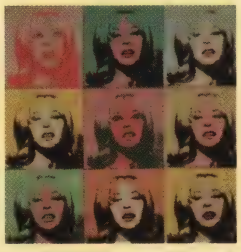
Imprisonments, beheadings and bloodlettings are part of the history of the Tower of London, and a virtual tour at this site lets you see where it all took place. After you get past the annoying MIDI (all MIDIs are annoying) playing "Rule, Britannia," it's great fun: plenty of pictures of uniformed yeomen, flightless ravens and, of course, the bricks and battlements of the Tower. Check out the list of links for more on English history, from royal genealogies to Scotland Yard's site.

★★★

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

www.echonyc.com/~whitney/

The Whitney Museum in New York is an established arbiter of what's hip on the contemporary art scene, so we were delighted to see



that they've tackled the question of what's artistic on a computer screen by "actively producing and presenting works by artists working on the Web." In addition to viewing some Whitney-approved art sites, you'll find out what's on exhibit at the actual museum, and browse through its gift shop—thanks, but no thanks, to the bongo-shaped salt and pepper shakers.

★★★★

AS SEEN ON TV

www.asontv.com

You might have thought that George Foreman's grilling machine, Bacon Magic and the AB Flex machine were only for losers who watch infomercials. Thanks to a company called EnterNet, impulse buying has a whole new meaning. EnterNet brings TV to you, offering desirable items that squeeze, flatten, slice, dice, shred, chip and chop, and come with free instructional videos. Hurry to get lower-than-ever prices because these great items are available only for a limited time! You can also receive a free Twirl-a-Tie for every order over $50 (excluding shipping and handling and while supplies last). From this Web site, you can also order your very own As Seen on TV kiosk and become a living infomercial at your local mall.

★★★

BULLFIGHTING AT ITS FINEST

www.isat.com/taurino/index2.html

Gerry Campos is an aficionado and photographer who has compiled photos of matadors in various stages of bullfighting. You can browse this site in Spanish or English to learn about cultural traditions or find out where to buy tickets for upcoming festivals in Mexico. If the pictures from "los Cornadas [the Gorings]" are too graphic, you can still enjoy the matadors' passionate facial expressions and elaborate costumes.

★★★

THE CAFÉ DE COLOMBIA

www.juanvaldez.com

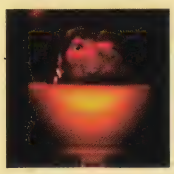
"Grab life by the beans!" Click on Juan Valdez's miniature Shockwave-powered body to navigate the Colombian Coffee Web site (in English or Spanish), where you can learn coffee slang from around the world, take the Juan Valdez quiz and research the history of Colombian coffee. The enlargeable photos of people processing coffee beans are almost as good as the Discovery Channel. Don't miss the recipe section—Mrs. Valdez offers a "coffee velvet" drink, spiced coffee sponge cake and mocha pie.

★★★★

DEKE'S MCDONALD'S HAPPY MEAL TOY OF THE WEEK PAGE

www.mindspring.com/~thedeke/hapmeal.htm

This site's title explains its purpose. Deke scans each week's toy, and fellow collectors submit updates from 16 nations, including South Africa, Italy and Singapore. From this site, go to the McDonald's Collectors Club, which has 1,200 members. You can even order a book called McDonald's Happy Meal Toys Around the World for $25. By the way, the site is not affiliated with McDonald's.



★★

DISCGOLF

www.discgolf.com

Discgolf is a Frisbee-like sport that involves throwing Frisbee-like objects through hanging chains into a barrel. Don't say the F word around a discgolfer, because most of them are adamant that discgolf is not Frisbee—that it is far more fun and requires more skill. It's also a big business. This Web site contains links to golfdisc pro shops, the Professional Disc Golf Association, and information about rules, tournaments and courses. There's even a company that will make "Discards" of you in your favorite pose—oooh! Give (or throw) them to all your friends.

★★★

INTERNATIONAL VINTAGE LIGHTER EXCHANGE

www.vintagelighters.com

Believe it or not, Jackie O's Dupont Black Lacquer Lighter was just sold for over $75,000 at an auction. If smoking is your hobby or horror, find more trivia like this and see photos of antique and retro lighters at this Web site. You can buy, sell and trade with other visitors, or just admire creative ashtrays and other legal smoking paraphernalia.

★★★

INTERNET CULINARY CYBERCITY

www.culinary.net/cgi-bin/iccentry.cgi

"The Food & Drink Capital of the World Wide Web" has more than an extensive archive of recipes and restaurant reviews. The experienced chefs from Kansas who created this site include articles about starting a successful restaurant, redesigning your kitchen, and information on health and nutrition. Ride the Restaurant Tour Bus to find reviews of gourmet restaurants, greasy spoon diners and coffeeshops all over the country. With a free membership in the Culinary Village, the site will host your personal Web page—an excellent promotion for chefs, writers and culinary students. Even if you're not a great cook, sign up for membership anyway, because you might win free food from their sponsors!

★★★★★

JASPER'S ORIGAMI MENAGERIE

www.cytex.com/go/jasper/origami/

With over 40 photos of origami by paper-folding experts, Jasper's Origami Menagerie is a great way to appreciate paper-folding art without the paper cuts. Read helpful tips on how to avoid "aggressive overfolding" and visit the ominous "Dark Side," where you will find poems and origami dedicated to mammoths. Webmaster John Paulsen provides links to MIT's giant origami sponge and a frighteningly large number of origami-obsessed people with home pages.

★★

THE JOY OF PAINTING WITH BOB ROSS

bobross.com

The late Bob Ross's TV show *The Joy of Painting* has been broadcast on PBS stations since 1981, educating the world that "painting is not just for the chosen few—it is for everyone." His Web site offers floral painting tips, a catalog of his paintings and books, and an opportunity to win free coffee mugs by taking the Bob Ross Quiz. Bob Ross's face, and the attached poofy brown afro, appear at the bottom of every page, where you can click "Take me home, Bob."

★★

NICK'S PAGE OF EXTREME YO

www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/5933/

"What is the best user-defined lubricant on a yo-yo with a Delrin spool (Yomegas)?" Nick in New Jersey answers this question and more on his page of extreme yo. He's done two science-fair projects on yo-yos, and his page details the pros and cons of all the yo-yos in his vast collection, including drawings of ball-bearing axles, prices, and availability. Yo-yo aficionados know how to network—this site provides links to maintenance, tips, yo-yo videos and other yo-yo gurus.

★★★

PACHINKO JOE'S

www.pachinkojoes.com

Pachinko is a Japanese phenomenon that combines gambling slot machines and pinball games. For a pricey $400+, you can have a reconditioned Pachinko machine from Japan and your own personalized set of steel balls. Pachinko Joe's entertainingly classless attitude (lots of references to nude women) will have you "screamin' like a squirrel on steroids." As Joe says, "When you play Pachinko, you gotta have balls of steel."

★★

LAND OF THE LUNCHBOXES

www2.ari.net/home/kholcomb/lunch.html

With a moving scroll of lunchboxes and extensive sections dedicated to Blizzard Boxes, Vinyl Boxes, and Domes, exploring the Land of the Lunchboxes is more fun than finding out your mom accidentally packed you two Twinkies and a Jolt Cola. The '70s Saturday section lets you hear the theme song for each lunchbox, including The Jetsons and Hong Kong Phooey. Collectors—don't miss out on the Trading Post and Pictorial Pricelist.

★★★★★

THE ALCHEMY WEB SITE

www.levity.com/alchemy/index.html

Many people consider alchemy a misguided form of "science" in which people attempted to create life-extending elixirs and turn lead into gold—in short, creating magic from the mundane. But the creators of this site believe that alchemy is still relevant for what it tells us about human psychology, philosophy, the metaphysical and proto-chemistry. That's why it boasts an extensive (28 MB) library of images and information on the subject, and acts as a serious resource for anyone interested in learning about this spiritual way of dealing with practical matters.

★★★★

ASTRAL PROJECTION HOME PAGE

www.lava.net/~goodin/astral.html

As a collection of resources for lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences (OOBE), this site has few equals in cyberspace. It's the home of the Astral Library, which gives advice on whether or not to use drugs in the process, documents the fears of people who have experienced astral projection, and discusses the signposts of an OOBE. It also includes a plethora of articles on astral projection and other paranormal experiences.

★★★

THE DARK LAIR OF INFINITE EVIL

www.dma.org/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/mitchelj/desecrate/evil/main

We're still not sure if this really qualifies as an "occult" site, but it's certainly dark—and it's fun. Send evilgrams to your despised enemies or view e-mail attempts to convert the Webmaster. Our favorite section was the Cool Tools page, where we passed on our own evil message to the world and then found out approximately how much time we had until we'd be sent to hell. A word to the wise: Heed the site's warnings or you may regret it.

★★★★★

DARK SIDE OF THE WEB

www.gothic.net/darkside

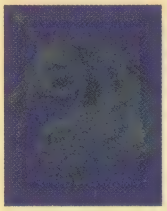
If it involves the occult, the paranormal, the gothic or events that just can't be explained, it's here. The Dark Side of the Web doesn't have much content other than a list of well-maintained links to places all over the Web, but there are over 2,700 of these in a variety of categories like Dark Web Toys and Horror and Literature. If you're interested in mysticism and magick, few places on the information superhighway provide a better starting point.

★★★★

ET VILLAGE NETWORKING COMMUNITY

www.etvillage.com

The main concerns of this site are community, ideas and universal harmony, so it tries to provide something for everyone. Described as a networking area for people to share information and do business, it has sections (parapsychology, alternative healing, UFOs) of special interest to most faiths. There doesn't seem to be a consistent design element in the Village, but then again, maybe that's part of the point.



★★★★

FACADE WORLD WIDE WEB TAROT

www.Facade.com/Occult/tarot/

It might be questionable how well fortune telling works (or if it works at all), especially through a medium as impersonal as the Web can be. But if you're game, have your future divined one of five different ways at this site—by using tarot, bibliomancy, runes, I Ching, biorhythms or stichomancy. Although the readings can be a little confusing for novices, you'll actually learn a little about what different cards and runes mean.

★★★

HAQQANI SUFI FOUNDATION HOMEPAGE

www.best.com/~informe/mateen/haqqani.html

Sufism, the Way of the Heart and the Mystical Path of Islam, is the religion spotlighted at this multilingual site. If, like us, you weren't very knowledgeable about Sufism in the first place, you'll learn a lot here—a first-person account

of hell and the basics of Islam are among the offerings you'll find. Did you know that Prince Charles is a secret convert to Islam? We do, now that we've been exposed to the Haqqani Foundation.

★★★★

MYSTICAL CRYSTAL

www.lightwork.dk/Mystical.Crystal/

The healing properties of crystals are documented at this site, which doesn't limit itself to just descriptions of different stones and gems—it also includes configurations and types of techniques, like crystal massage. The site could use a few more pictures, but is useful for those wondering which rock will best channel creative energies and how to use it. As a bonus, Atlantean healing and the Pyramids are also prominently featured.

★★★

THE SATANIC NETWORK

www.satannet.com

This site invites netizens to "Turn your back on god," speculating that quite a few Web surfers are actually Satanists and "just don't know it yet." Amusing things to do at this site: Figure out how many of the nine Satanic sins you've broken (such as self-deceit, herd conformity and stupidity), become a card-carrying member of the Church of Satan, or browse through a list of Satanic movies—we found *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* there ("Daddy, I want a goat's head!").

★★★★

THE SHADOWLANDS

users.aol.com/shadoland2/ghost.html

The main attraction of this site is a formidable list of ghost stories. None are professionally written; instead, they come from other netizens and range from extraordinary explanations of the mundane to truly bizarre tales of strange occurrences. A few other features are included, like a gallery of ghostly photographs, along with the tale of the alleged ghost in the film *Three Men and a Baby*. For help with hauntings, the services of a paranormal investigator have been enlisted too.

★★★

TEMPLE OF THE FEATHERED SERPENT

www.mortimer.com/eskova/TEMPLE.htm

The Feathered Serpent was worshipped in its different forms by the ancient Mayans, Incans and Aztecs (as Queztalcoatl), and has now made the transition to cyberspace. The Temple is dedicated to furthering the cause of an ancient form of spirituality, which is allied closely with natural cosmic cycles. Facts about Mayan calendars and a chart to help you find your own temple of birth are covered also.

★★★

VAMPYRES ONLY

doncaster.on.ca/~vampyre/

If you've ever stayed up nights pondering questions like, "What happens to a pregnant woman who is bitten by a vampire?"—and

enjoyed it—this may be just the place for you. Poetry from Anne Rice, a test to determine vulnerability to vampirism and facts about the soap opera *Dark Shadows* are just a few of the tidbits that are revealed about the children of the night, who will find a friendly haven at Vampyres Only.

★★★★

ADAM'S FOX BOX
tavi.acomp.usf.edu/foxbox/

Far from just detailing fox habitats and habits, this site delves into vulpine mythology and fiction, returning with such stories as Aesop's "The Fox and the Grapes." It also includes links to "fringe-foxy miscellany" like the League Against Cruel Sports, and a picture index with both photographs and drawings. Fun!
★★★★★

ALMOST AMAZING TURTLE CAM
www.campusware.com/turtles/

We admit that we were initially drawn to this site by the relative honesty of its title—but there's one more thing to say for it, which is that the turtles actually seem active enough to be worth watching (for a few minutes, anyway). And if you happen to catch them during naptime, you can always visit the collection of feeding-time photos stored on the site.
★★

CYBERPANDA
www.cyberpanda.com/main.html

Panda news, panda quizzes, panda chat and panda postcards are just a sampling of what this massive site has to offer. Visitors with a real affinity for the cuddly looking creatures could easily spend all day going through the links here; we liked the debate about whether the giant panda should be classified with bears or with raccoons.

★★★★★

FIONA'S SHARK MANIA
www.oceanstar.com/shark/

A diving-off point for information about the fearsome fishes, Fiona's Shark Mania presents neatly organized shark stories, pictures and pointers to aquariums, oceanographic institutes and commercial divers. Fiona's even organized a mailing list that covers sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras. Cool!
★★★

GORDON'S ENTOMOLOGICAL HOME PAGE
www.ex.ac.uk/~gjlramel/welcome.html

What is it with amateur zoologists always putting their first names in their site titles?

Well, never mind it. Gordon's great on bugs, and there's a lot to learn about them, since invertebrates make up "more than 99 percent of all recorded animal species." We read here that woodlice were once swallowed as a cure for minor stomach ailments. On another page, a scrolling Java applet admonished us to "Remember: An arthropod has a separate mouth and anus, an exoskeleton, and jointed limbs." We'll certainly try to keep it in mind.
★★★★

HOUSE OF SLIME
www.teleport.com/~jleon/

"Slime is what has been missing from the clean, dry, electrical world of computers. And little else brings slime to life like slugs." At this oddly pretty and poetic site devoted to slugs, you can read about the gastropods in all their gelatinous glory, and perhaps pick up a little appreciation for these small creatures that "live one to six years, depending on species" and eat "whatever the forest and field have to offer," including—ugh—other slugs.

★★★★★

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY
www.rabbit.org

Alongside all the cute pictures of furry, floppy bunnies, this site has a serious mission: to rescue abandoned rabbits and place them as adoptees. It's a fine resource for rabbit care, and even includes a special section for kids, which—weirdly—suggests some jovially insulting nicknames for your carrot-crunching pets.

THE SHOWROOM
www.nwlink.com/~timelvis/showroom.html

Want to know what Elvis Presley would look like as a pet bird? The Showroom presents an Elvis impersonator who really flies: a parakeet in a white satin jumpsuit and miniature aviator glasses. And though the site is pretty much just another entry in the Web's fun-with-Photoshop files, it includes an admirably silly FAQ wherein "Friz-Elvis" answers questions from his fans. "How big are you?" "That's a pretty personal question. And I won't answer it because my momma taught me not to brag."

★★★

SHY DOGS LINKS PAGE
www.geocities.com/Heartland/9820/

Sure, there are people who are afraid of dogs, but there are also dogs who are afraid of people; this site collects their individual stories (many had been abused as puppies) as well as listing training techniques and certified animal behaviorists. Shy dogs, we learned here, may snap at strangers out of fear, so they need to be specially trained—but the pictures and tales contributed by doting owners suggest that it's all worthwhile.
★★

TAPIRNET
www.albany.net/~collfam/TapirNet.html

The claim is that this is "the foremost tapir Web site"; we wouldn't have thought there was any competition for the title, but in fact three other tapir-related sites are listed here. Information at TapirNet about the "strange, primitive, timid and inoffensive" animals comes mostly from nature books and encyclopedias, but also includes an imagemap for learning about "tapir external anatomy."
★★★

TIGER INFORMATION CENTER
www.5tigers.org

Tigers are in trouble, and this thorough informational site was created as part of an international effort to help save them. Here you can read about the five remaining species of tiger and about threats to their continued existence—poaching, for example, is still a problem because traditional Chinese medicine attributes curative powers to tiger parts. (And though we'd love a cure for "laziness and pimples," we certainly don't want to drive any animals to extinction by buying tiger brains.) An animated GIF tracks dwindling tiger populations, while the multimedia section features tiger pictures and sounds with headings like "Moan" and "Growl." Part of the money for the Save the Tiger Fund was put up by the Exxon Corporation, which must have been looking to mend its image by donating to an environmental cause.

our pick

WHY CATS PAINT
www.netlink.co.nz/~monpa/index.html

This site related to the book of the same name (and co-sponsored by the Museum of Non-Primate Art) scares us, because we can't quite tell how serious it's supposed to be. At first the critical quotes about "bold monochromatic daubs" and "masterfully controlled flamboyance" just seemed funny, but then we got into the feline painting FAQ and the cat art show catalog and started to wonder if we weren't somehow overlooking our own kitties' expressive urges. Cat painting products are sold at the site, but curious pet owners can start with a simple set of acrylic paints: "Obviously, if you can manage to mix in a little of the cat's own urine with the paints, the cat will be more likely to use them."

★★★★

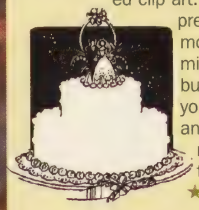
BIRDS ON HIGH
www.pacificnet.net/doves/

If you haven't found enough things to spend money on for your wedding day, consider renting some birds. "Professional ceremonial white dove releases" are Birds on High's business—in addition to providing services themselves, they've got a nationwide referral service. We learned here that "Just like human athletes, our birds have a special diet before big events so they can perform at top levels without 'messing up.'"

★★

GEORGE'S WEDPAGE
barrow.uwaterloo.ca/~ghballin/wedpage.html

This site is simply a collection of wedding-related clip art. Most of the images are pretty corny (but then, aren't most weddings?)—still, it might come in handy for building a Web page about your wedding. The black-and-white line drawings, in most cases, look better than the color stuff.



★★

THE HANDFASTING
homepages.together.net/~alaric77/Handfasting.htm

This page is the dramatic description of a Wiccan joining ceremony, with thoughts on how a "handfasting" should be performed and held. The vows and prayers have some beautiful imagery, though they're not substantively different from most declarations of love: "Through each other's eyes do both see their vision more clearly, with each other's ears do they hear the call more plainly, and in each other's arms do they find greater strength than either alone possesses. For as far as they can see, their path is one."

★★

THE KALLAH GUIDE
www.kallah.com

Described as a Jewish bridal guide, this site seems to be sponsored by a number of different wedding consultants, salons and shops, most of them in New York. Alongside all the promos, it has a bit of useful content. We liked the combination of stress management and beauty advice: "Everything becomes magnified and blown out of proportion, and the stress level is at its optimum. This of course does wonders for your complexion."

★★

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE WEDDING INFORMATION
paul.spu.edu/~kst/bib/bib.html

Quail, venison, boar, eel, bread and braised lettuce are some of the suggested foods here for giving your wedding feast a medieval theme. Kirsti Thomas, the site's maintainer, also has ideas on invitations, attire and flowers. And if that isn't enough, extensive bibliographies (Kirsti's a librarian at a university) explain where to look up specifics like wedding vows and recipes. Even if you're not into themed weddings, this is a wonderful look at centuries of ceremony and tradition.

★★★★★

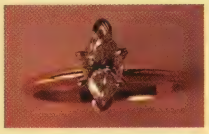
MODERN BRIDE
www.modernbride.com

This somewhat skimpy online version of the print magazine *Modern Bride* offers expected sections like "Wedding Planner," "Honeymoon Planner" and "Fashion & Beauty," but also has a clickable imagemap with local guides to products and services. The main problem with *Modern Bride* (and magazines like it) is that it suggests nearly everything, from renting a reception hall to picking out a dress, should be done "as soon as possible before the wedding." If you could do everything all at once, you wouldn't need all those months to plan, now, would you?

★★

NETDIAMONDS, INC.
www.netdiamonds.com/netdiamonds/

Even people who aren't afraid to transmit their credit card numbers over the Net may pause a little at the idea of spending hundreds or even thousands of dollars buying an engagement ring electronically. Still, you can do it here, and the promises of independent appraisals and guaranteed satisfaction on NetDiamond's products seem convincing. Worth a look, if you're in the market to buy.



★★

OUR HONEYMOON
www.tezcat.com/~jalfrank/honwel.html

Subtitled "Two City Slickers Out in the Middle of Nowhere," this is the tale of a couple of newlyweds who decided to take a mountain-bike tour for their honeymoon and "discovered that the 'outdoor experience' is not like an L.L. Bean ad." With all the anxiety and planning that goes into so many weddings, it's good to see that someone has a sense of humor about things that go awry: "We were doing fine, even ignoring the light snow that began to fall around us. Then we hit the mud. This wasn't the mud you're thinking of, the kind that gathers around puddles, or makes cute little pies. This was DEVIL-MUD..."

★★★

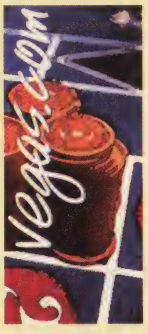
UNGROOM'D
www.ungroomd.com

This slick e-zine devoted to the male perspective on weddings greets visitors with a counter showing the number of American men who have been married since the first of the year. (The numbers just keep on ticking.) It covers the mechanics of wedding organization and expenses, but more importantly—and enjoyably—includes essays like "Popping the Age Old Question with Newfound Style" and "Baggage" (as in: "I hate it when you do that, my ex-boyfriend used to do that and it drives me crazy!").

★★★★

VEGAS.COM
www.vegas.com

Why fuss over flowers and hors d'oeuvres when you and your honey could just head to Vegas to get hitched? In addition to wedding chapels ("from drive-thru to full service"), this official tourist guide lists casinos, restaurants and night clubs, and includes e-mail and phone information for booking a hotel room. You'll also find the address and hours for the Clark County Courthouse, where Nevada marriage licenses can be obtained—Saturday at 2 a.m. is no problem.



★★

WAY COOL WEDDINGS
tribeca.ios.com/~whitey/waycool/

In June of 1995, Kim and Carl White put up a Web page about their wedding. Two years later, they're expecting their first baby, but they still like the idea of using the Internet to share wedding experiences, so every week they highlight a different personal wedding site that they think is "way cool." After looking through a few of them, we couldn't decide whether to be impressed by the beautiful site designs or grossed out by the unabashed ego-fests. Either way, the opportunity for voyeurism is irresistible.

★★★★

►NAKED, AND LOVING IT: NUDISM THRIVES ON THE NET◄

by Charles Daney

Have you ever met a nudist? You almost certainly have, because nudists are among your friends, neighbors and co-workers, though you are likely not aware of it. Nudists generally don't go naked in public or even advertise their presence. They aren't wild-eyed radicals, either; they're just very ordinary folks when they have clothes on. They often won't admit, even to close friends, that they really enjoy not wearing clothes.

In most "advanced" societies, the taboos around nudity are even stronger than those around sex. People in casual conversation or on national TV may happily ramble on about the details of their sex life. Nudists have generally not been so open, even though by conservative estimates, several million people in North America enjoy certain kinds of recreation (like swimming) in the nude, or simply like being naked when at home.

This secretiveness is changing, however, thanks to the Net. People have been talking about recreational nudity on the **rec.nude** newsgroup for many years. (It was one of the first newsgroups in the early days of Usenet; computer people, it seems, are likelier than most to enjoy nudity.) And now many personal Web pages are appearing, announcing their owners' interest in nudism and candidly advocating nudity's advantages over "clothes compulsiveness." I keep track of this, since one goal of my site (**www.best.com/~cgd/home/naturism/**) is to catalog all the Web sites—around 500 of them—that have something of interest to people who like to be naked. In fact, it's now quite easy to meet nudists on the Web.

What do nudists put on their Web sites? They feature: pictures (generally the kind only close friends would like—disappointing to porn hounds), stories about adventures *au naturel* and, often, essays that try to explain "Why?"

Nudists feel they've been badly misunderstood by mainstream society, with some justification. Misinformation from the mainstream media is often blamed for nudity being so taboo. For instance, many nudists prefer to be called "naturists," and they refer to their philosophy as "naturism" rather than "nudism"—simply because being naked is natural. After all, we're born that way. The underlying philosophy is acceptance of the body just as it is.

One of the two main nudist organizations in the United States is The Naturist Society (**www.naturist.com**). Most outsiders, however, have never even heard of the terms "naturist" and "naturism." If they have, the assumption is that they have to do with watching birds or collecting bugs. Also, naturists never refer to places where they gather as "colonies." They're "parks," "resorts," or "camps," please.

In the last few decades, naturists have been able to enjoy the outdoors at public (though usually remote) beaches, rivers and forests. Word spreads rapidly over the Net about the best places to go, or to avoid. This has led to a predictable backlash from the "family values" crowd, who have mounted an aggressive effort to stamp out nudity everywhere. Such people would be astonished to learn that there are many conservative religious folk who like to be naked with others, and see no conflict between that and their religion. Religious naturists even have their own organizations and Web pages.

But most irritating to naturists is the tendency to confuse nudity with sex. Adult naturists enjoy sex as much as anyone else, but that isn't the reason they like being unclothed. What they like is the comfort, the stress reduction that being naked offers, as well as the camaraderie and openness they find in socializing with others of similar mind.

Naturists have to contend with this misconception that naturism is a sexual interest. It incurs the wrath of conservative religionists, it deters families and body-conscious young adults from participating, and it attracts people whose interest actually is sexual. On the Net, this confusion has hampered networking among naturists. Some search engines don't even index nudist sites because "nudism" is assumed to be a code word for sexual content.

In spite of such problems, naturism, as a lifestyle and a philosophy, is definitely coming out of the closet, thanks in part to the Net. It's no longer difficult to find people who like to talk about just why naturism deserves not to remain a well-kept secret.

Charles Daney runs the Being and Nakedness site at **www.best.com/~cgd/home/naturism/**, which includes a categorized index of almost every naturist site on the Web.

@large

WHAT YOU GOT IN THAT THING?

by Rev. Ivan Stang

Overread at a party on IRC

Gunther: What you got in that thing?

Gomer: It's spummin' on a Harley Davidson Net-Crusher at about 300.5 kilospurtz...58 megapegs REM, expendable...60-ply CD-MWOWM, Hard Card on the floor. Got a scuzz-buster from Kamikaze Robotics. That there hive drive'll hold a glick in it. Vid-printer's a JetStreamer with Synchro-Squash Time Compressor. You can send vidmail back in time about three days with that. Got Tape Eater Deluxe for back-up. It'll do. What you runnin'?

Gunther: Just last week got me a rebuilt Gizmo 65 FTL Warp 10 Pee-C-SuperTowerPower-PadBook. 1,000 mph. 64 SPAM. Fits in your back pocket. Screen rolls out to nine feet. Ain't got but a digagig of them SnowFreeze hemis, though...I'm fixing to sell that for a New World Order 5. That sumbytch'll go...'bout like...zero to sky in 5-kay. With a GatesCrasher.

Gomer: Those are good. My buddy, he could do 3-P D-cup with his. But, you know, that won't do you a bit of good without a Lemon 2000 SpeedBundle Fumbler re-outstalled. Hey, what kind of screen scraper is that? That's really phrap.

Gunther: Eye Scorcher 3.0...got it cranked up to 11...I like to smell my retinas burning. And I got these two BlahBlah Woof2 Sound Cannon speakers...got 'em jay-pegged up on refork fracks, with a Crinkler.

Gomer: I found me a damn Crinkler at the junk shop—$5, perfectly good Crinkler! I guess the owner thought it was a carrot peeler or something! He musta thought the blood from the implants was rust. Had the reverse anti-compatibility neuron jack with it, still, too. No copy protect. Itches a bit...I only plug it into me for an hour at a whack. You can pump 60,000 mitacrunts through it, but it ain't street-legal if you do that.

Gunther: But you can race out in the boonies and the cops won't know. Gotta use Crunt Catcher. Keeps them runloads from crunting up with bad compsacs.

Gomer: *Road & Net* says that's the best-rated scamblaster. You can take a trinaries newsgroup at 90 with one of those. 99, if it's a muggy day. How've you got that baby surgeproofed?

Gunther: Meltdown 3000. Good for 40 gravs. Any heavier than that and you're talking plutonium bills. It'll handle sunspots. My slave though, she chokes so bad I might as well be fropping through BreakWind-0.

Gomer: I know what you mean...which slave you using? Local?

Gunther: ROM dot COM.

Gomer: Yeah, I'm on ON-On dot on. They're all right, but they charge you five hypercrunts for over three spewputs an hour. But I got it tweaked to the Macs. If the traffic isn't bad I can e-vid five floppyporn trinaries, download an updraft, and be running TurboCrashDoubler Pro at the same time, all on, oh, about half an ether-crunt of gas.

Gunther: You want one of these beers? It's native code.

Gomer: Now you're talkin'. Hey, you know how to get out of paying those influx bills?

Gunther: How?

Gomer: Join the Saucer Geeks and cut your "boot-mokus" off!!

Gunther: Hahahaha...Hey, how'd the AWOL Spamboy get his flops read?

Gomer: How?

Gunther: He didn't!

Gomer: Hahahaha. Hey, you ever mess with KillerDeathApp?

Gunther: Oh man. I've practically been flatlining with Kai's Cool-As-Hell 4.0.

Gomer: Global Idiot BitKicker with ByteYanker. Check THAT out. Site Mites go nites for that.

Gunther: I've got that already! I met this one crazy cyberslummer in Vee Arr Bar One last night, she took one look at my reflex R-AdAptors...we're talkin', seriously, 8 jillion dpi...and she had to have it, computerated, right then and there.

Gomer: Oh yeah, man. I hear ya. Believe me. I know. I use ZipperDown myself for that, but believe me, I know, man.

Gunther: Hahahaha. I'm gonna get me another beer, you want one?

Gomer: How 'bout them Hackers yesterday?

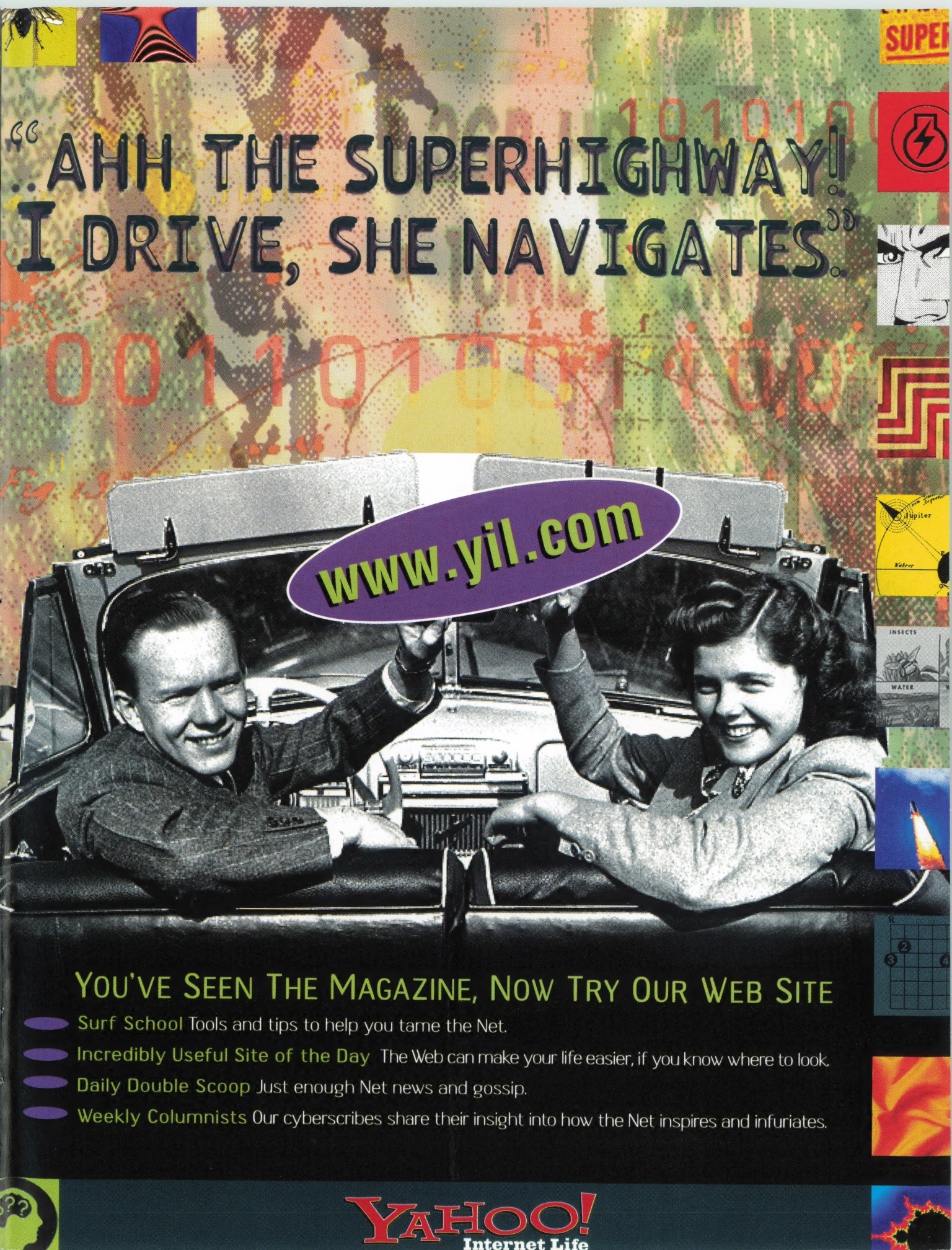
Gunther: That was some game.

Gomer: Them EnCryptos didn't stand a chance.

Gunther: Virus McGee was on top of that one play...

Gomer: Hey, excuse me man, I'm totally wireless...I've gotta go use Toilet 3.0 before my gigaplugger times out!

Gunther: I hear ya man. Catch ya on the flipflop. (end of log)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